COMPUTRIZED

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TIRANOGUE

CHAPTER I

TOMMY BLACKBURN said " What's the good of five thousand pounds," and looked grumpily at the traffic in Piccadilly.

" If it came once a year," went on Tommy, " then it would be something. What's that, Bones? War Loan —War Loan at five per cent, with something claimed for the Income Tax. Of course it was very decent of Aunt Eliza to die. . . ."

Major Alexander Trevor, known as Bones because of his podginess, murmured " inevitable " and " rather unkind," with a slightly shocked expression.

" To die and leave me it," said Tommy. " You ass! But what's a man who has lived all his life suffering from aspirations to do, and no income to do with it. Four years of Flanders mud semi-coloured by glorious weeks with unlimited means have finished me up. And the old Buster had the reputation of being fabulously rich. So she was, and left it all for a year to some hospital —that is the interest on it. Last time I was back she said to me, ' I wonder how you'd spend my money, Tommy,' and I said ' Blue it, but I hope I'll be grey when the time comes,' or one of the rotten things one does say, like telling your host you adore raw game when it makes you iller than ever now, because it reminds you of war. And then she left me five thousand, with a sealed envelope, which the lawyer tells me contains good advice, to be given me at the end of twelve months.

"What I meant to do," said Tommy dolefully, "was to wallow on horses. Buy them brown and chestnut and grey and black, and know what it felt like to grip three hundred guineas all alive and with a buck jump in it between my knees—to hunt and hunt and hunt and spend the summer keeping my weight down and getting new blood trained. She was a dear old sport, too—Eliza hunted herself in her young days."

"Anyway you offended her?" Bones asked. "Anything she disliked about your behaviour?"

"She couldn't endure Revue or legs," said Tommy absently. "She met me here one week's leave and I took her off to the sprightliest show on—Dinner at the Pic first. It was the era of flapper skirts and high boots, I remember. Sure we went on to where there weren't any skirts. 'Is this what you come to see?' said Aunt Eliza, 'when you're on leave. All you soldiers?' she looked round at rows of khaki.

"'It cheers us up,' I said. Then she said we might cheer ourselves up in sylvan fields and all that, but the fluffy stage got at her.

"'London's all legs,' she barked. 'If I thought you'd spend my money here you'd never have it. I'd rather you wasted it betting and so on.' The only place we could get into next night was the Gaiety show, and she hated that too."

Bones grunted thoughtfully. Piccadilly traffic roared by, taxis which would actually stop to take up fares darting in and out; great buses thundering and shaking as the world readjusted itself to peace.

"I'm out of the Army, like yourself, Bones," Tommy stretched out a slightly shortened leg, "with about four hundred a year to rush through life on. Price of two good horses, perhaps, if you got 'em cheap. If the old bird hadn't got the flu and gone to a Dorking——"

Bones murmured Dorcas softly.

"Meeting with it on her chest," snapped Tommy, "you do interrupt, Bones, an' got pneumonia. Took her last fence at racing pace, poor old dear. And then I believed I could stop aspiring at last—that I'd be rich."

Tommy huddled into a big green leather chair and grunted miserably.

Major Trevor drank some tea. The quick hazy autumn dusk was deepening outside, a fog creeping up from the river, and a faint dust of frost even in September in the air.

"Bones!"

Trevor, who was pouring out some tea, dropped the jug into the cup at the roar, contemplating the milky ruin with asperity.

"Dam jug in splinters!" he said. "If its cholera, Tommy, get brandy; but don't yell, it won't relieve you."

Tommy, upright now, flapped so impatiently at the triviality of smashing the milk jug that he knocked down the cup. With the roar slightly modified he called Bones a fool and said he'd got it.

Major Trevor, hurriedly removing the tea table, replied that he appeared to have.

"One year," said Tommy. "Make it into one year, Bones. D'ye see?"

"I hope to the Lord it won't be at His Majesty's pleasure," said Bones listlessly. "Hi, waiter, another tea—nervous breakdown here—Major Blackburn—they still understand war terms. Now, what is it, Tommy? Easy boy."

"One year," foamed Tommy. "Spend the whole show and stop aspiring. Are you on, Bones?"

Trevor brought his plump little form to the perpendicular. He was maimed, too, his left arm almost useless, and a scar on his pink, round cheek.

"You mean one crowded year of glorious life, as the papers used to say 'bout any poor blighter who stopped a bullet in France," he said.

Tommy nodded emphatically.

"Think it over," said Bones soothingly. "December 31st will come round."

Tommy lapsed into sulky gloom and sat down again. The two were dining that evening with friends and going to a theatre, and Bones Trevor said he thought that Tommy's alterating moods of merriment and depression would prove disconcerting if he did not improve.

Tommy went away to dress, saying nothing more about the plan.

Mrs. Waring was a thin little woman with two daughters, Rose and Violet. Rose, who was small with calculating eyes, had driven a motor during the war; Violet had organized charities in her spare moments. Now that the war was over their mother was painfully aware that suitable man power was lacking, and both girls were recalled to their old life.

"You mustn't mind Tommy, he's coming into money," Major Trevor explained. "He kind of goes up and down on it."

Mrs. Waring wished to know if it was a large legacy.

"Five thousand for a year," said Tommy, suddenly exhilarated. "I'll just go round hunting."

Violet Waring's love of horses rose to boiling point for the evening. She talked of Cheshire and the Vale and her days there—of her splendid brown which had gone to end his days in France, and of gallops good and bad. Tommy thrilling to it. His days had been so few, snatched in a week's leave on hired horses and any which he could get to.

One week he had spent in Ireland with the Kildares, his joy tempered by a refusing bay hireling which went well until it tired and then stuck its toes out and endured punishment with the resignation born of long custom.

This brute was varied by a weedy chestnut with flat sides and no middle, who honestly did her best until her shape stopped her. She could flash along a field when she was fresh, but absolutely stopped in dirt or up a hill—these were the chances taken by a man flying home for a few days. The only hirelings available being the rejected animals from a batch of chargers, hurriedly trained to jump by the optimistic owner and then hired out at three guineas a day. Spur scarred weary days to the hunter whose heart is not in it.

Tommy alternately sparkled and fell flat through the evening. The display of shapely limbs at the Hippodrome made him almost murderous.

" They put her out," he snapped to Bones. " Two of 'em on every girl."

Trevor returned coldly that the Hippodrome stage was not supposed to be culled from Rockhampton and fixed an unneeded eyeglass to his left eye.

Meanwhile the two Miss Warings whispered gently to each other and Tommy was asked to luncheon next day. He proved gloomily evasive. Tattersalls was once more a place of life and he wanted to go there.

" I'm thinking it out to-morrow," he said. " Valentine's lot are up and there's a chestnut—an' a grey that I want to see specially. The chestnut will go to three hundred," said Tommy bitterly, " Frank says."

" He'll do no such thing, he's fired for cubs," said Trevor. " He'd do for one of our stud, Tommy. Look up, man, every time you see a leg it gets on your nerves."

Tommy returned that he knew somehow they'd done the trick and lapsed into fresh gloom.

He cheered up at supper and allowed Violet Waring to find out where he meant to spend the next day.

At Tattersalls on Saturday Tommy was glorying in the smell of clean straw and the rows of boxes occupied by hunters.

It's not so easy to get trained ones after all this Bosch chasing in France, the head man told Tommy, confidence having been generously stimulated. " But these here were hunted regular. Four of 'em came from Ireland, where they kept hunting going splendid, and this chestnut ran at Punchestown, well up fourth in the Connyngham Cup."

Tommy feasted his eyes on a rather narrow chestnut, showing more quality than power, but with great second thighs and a deep heart to make up for his lightness. He had been fired for curbs, probably as a two-year-old. The grey was a low powerful mare, also full of quality. Tommy knew what he wanted. He had saved a little in Flanders and he gloomed at the two hunters. He might spend all his savings on them and be well mounted, but where was a man with about five hundred a year to hunt in comfort. Two horses meant at the most, and with luck, three days a fortnight. Tommy liked two out each day.

He went from box to box staring at horses ; now a black, a grey, a chestnut, a bay. Some good, some more than indifferent, but all looking sporting of their class.

. The head man asked if he was on the buy, because if so, he had heard a whisper—private—that the good-looking bay in box nine shut up like a concertina after a mile or so.

" Kind of Napoleon the Great," said Tommy, returning to the chestnut.

" He won't go a great price, Sir," the man said, " being blemished."

" And to think," muttered Tommy, " if those legs hadn't put Eliza out. Some things are too bitter to bear." Tommy kicked furiously at nothing and nearly overbalanced himself.

Then he gave the same galvanic start which had upset Trevor at the start and caught the man by the shoulder.

" I'll do it ! " said Tommy. " I'll just cheat every one and be happy for one season."

Tattersall's man disengaged himself and backed dubiously, you never knew who were sane after shell-shock. He eyed Tommy's match-box nervously, muttering something about straw being werry easy to set on fire.

" Never you mind straw. My head's on fire," said Tommy, hurrying up the straw-strewn alleys under the glass roof and hailing a taxi violently.

" Free of legacy duty ain't it ? " he flung at the mild lawyer, to whose office he drove. " And to be paid at once—I'll take it now."

Mr. Greyling hoped that it was to be spent wisely.

" If a fellow isn't left enough to spend what's the use of being wise ? " snapped Tommy. " I'm going to blue the lot, Greyling, and don't you forget it. She might have known that five thousand was only a temptation to me."

Hubert Greyling cleared his throat, looking hard at a locked portion labelled " Miss Eliza Blackburn."

" P'r—P'raps she did know," he said slowly.

" It's going on legs too," said Tommy ; " mark that down, all on legs, and I'll take care they'll be legs with nothing on—I've no use for boots and bandages."

Mr. Greyling took out his cheque-book, writing in Tommy's name with slow and elaborate care. As he formed the letters he asked casually, " how long shell-shock took to wear off, and when Tommy had felt it most."

" Worst shock I ever got was caused by influenza," said Tommy gloomily, " and pneumonia. The shell-shock I got in France was through my left ankle, Greyling, nicely chucked shrapnell gave it."

Greyling finished the " n " in the name and wrote five equally slowly.

" If you'd be advised by an older man, Major Blackburn," he said unhappily.

" D'you think it was the legs did it ? " said Tommy absently. He was too absorbed to note the deep flush which dyed the lawyer's thin cheeks.

" For as I've said I'll put every half D into 'em now," finished Tommy. " Nice hard flat legs, she might have trusted me."

Greyling made a ruffled tail to his final " g." His disapprobation of the subject was obvious.

" Man knows where he is, but he never knows whether his next step will take him to another world or on to good fortune," Greyling said pettishly. " You are behaving, forgive me, Major, rather like a spoilt child who, because he cannot get one toy, breaks all his others."

Tommy said " That's right " equably.

" If you invest this in—say War Loans or Consols," Greyling waved the cheque invitingly. " One never knows what may happen."

" It's all going on legs," replied Tommy, his expression mulish. " Smart legs under well-shaped bodies an' I'll get the first four to-morrow. She's driven me to it."

Mr. Greyling, rising, said acidly that if it comes to pairs Major Blackburn's days of spending would not last long. And that out of Germany the idea was monstrous. He glared at Tommy's hardened grin and handed over the cheque asking for a receipt, which Tommy wrote neatly.

" One crowded season of glorious chase," said Tommy. " Thanks, Greyling, thought you might tell me if Aunt Eliza spoke to you or what she changed for. I know she left me it all once." The lawyer was silent. " Curse all legs," said Tommy, going out.

Antony Greyling opened the locked partition, looked at a sealed letter and sighed bitterly. He was fond of Tommy.

Tommy spent a blameless afternoon and went to see a production of Romeo and Juliet. He was down at Tattersalls early, a warm sense of a balance at Cox's upholding him, to revel in the crackle of crisp straw and the smell of stables and movement of many horses.

The grey moved well, snorting and prancing as he was trotted down, he wound his off foreleg a little, but he showed quality, and Tommy, elbowing his way to the front of the bidders, was astonished to have the horse knocked down to him at seventy pounds.

He turned gleefully to see Trevor near him.

" At this rate I can have ten, Bones," he said ; " got him for nothing."

Major Trevor made some thoughtful remarks concerning the necessity of advice, and stared moodily at the receding grey quarters.

" Bolts," he said tersely. " Just met Filey Hughes who comes from that country. Didn't know you were really here to buy, Tommy. I saw the grey last evening and Filey told me the brute scattered the Field twice and all but killed a girl who thought she could hold anything. He has his good days, lasting a month or so and then off he goes like a Portuguese private and never stops till his breath gives out. He took the Whip through a funeral, scattering the mourners. Best looking horse here all the time and one never knows what bit is to be found, Tommy ; so cheer up," he added, anxious to comfort. Tommy snarled at a weedy chestnut which was soaring in bids of ten pounds.

" Val's best hunter," said Trevor. " He outgrew her since he came home, or he wouldn't sell her. She's an Irish mare too."

Tommy listened to two-hundred bid, at two hundred he turned his back. He felt that the civil head man would lack further tips.

" Filey said a dun cob was worth getting," went on Trevor. " A mealy little brute with four callosed legs, but game for years—just too slow for the Vale."

Tommy eyed the dun ambling in. An honest little brute, fired all round, so deep that he looked a pony, with a lean intelligent head and the best of back and quarters. He looked round a little forlornly, perhaps his equine brain knowing that this journey meant a change of masters and the first step down in an old hunter's career. A job horse, ill fed and over-worked, ridden by the man with a lust for his money's worth, then cart horse, or perhaps later to crawl in a fly, out in heat and cold, patient and enduring.

" Top Hole dun gelding, aged."

The dun cob whinnied loudly and snorted over Bones.

" A good hunter, sound in wind and eyes. Start him, gentlemen."

Top Hole was started at twenty guineas by a man from the Midlands, who saw five guineas a week in the stout dun sides. He hovered at that.

Major Trevor said thirty in so determined a voice that the other buyer retired at once.

" Officer chap'll bid him to hundreds," he said, removing his thoughts to No. Twenty-five, a bay mare, a slight whistler.

" The brute looked so dam lonely," said Bones, stalking after his purchase.

Tommy, left alone, bought a swish-tailed bay with a sulky eye and concealed the purchase lest Trevor might know something about her. Just then, Sir Martin Fitz Hughes, a slim Major in the Guards, his dandyism unruffled by four years' war, fixed his monocled eye upon Tommy and remarked languidly that he was on for a gee or two.

He nodded feebly towards Red Delight, a horse by Red Prince, following the bidding with manifest effect, until the horse was knocked down at three hundred.

" Just a shade too much," he said. " Buying, Tommy ? "

Tommy was reluctantly obliged to conduct Martin to the grey's box and see the languid look of pity.

" Pity you didn't meet me," murmured Martin.

"Well, he's great when he's not running away, Tommy, and you'll have heaps of good days. I saw him clear the Woodham Brook and leave most of us in it. Bits? I should ride him without one, they're no use to him."

Sir Martin crawled languidly back to the auctioneer, purchasing a chestnut mare who chucked her head about nervously and at everything she saw.

"Gallops like an aeroplane," said Martin. "When she puts her head low enough to see the fences she's all right. The first two or three are a difficulty. Come and lunch. I've been up since ten and feeling tired."

The three went to the "Wellington" when Tommy talked of his troubles and his solution of them.

"One season or two," he said, "and then I can go to my cousin in California. I'm sick of hunting in imagination. Might take a pack of hounds. I've hunted the drag and harriers."

"Liqueur brandy, waiter; I'm deadly tired," murmured Sir Martin feebly. "And very strong coffee, Tommy, I'm in for a trifle. Take pack with you."

Bones Trevor, refusing potatoes sadly, whooped aloud, so startling an elderly General that he nearly complained to the Secretary about the new army.

"We'll all help to stretch it, Tommy. All buy horses and go somewhere with you. Where's the Field?"

Martin murmured they'd better buy a few where they went to. Railways hated movements of troops. Not a long journey either, he got so tired, but of course if one wanted hounds there were no packs vacant. Here he finished a large chop as if with difficulty and looked exhausted.

"We'll write an ad.," babbled Tommy. "R. Box 4, you know. And then I must get my horses fixed up."

They met Violet Waring at the door. She had intended to go to Tattersalls, but was late.

This time Tommy showed the grey to one who appreciated him. Violet could praise shrewdly, and knew a horse, the head man hovered unhappily, having heard of The Mist's failing and wondering if he would be believed if he said he had not known it.

" Sorry to hear he's 'ard of his mouth, Sir," he apologized. On Tommy remarking that he always looked out for runaways, the man went to the next box to confide to a friend that " half them poor officers had got shock to their poor brains an' God 'elp Masters of Hounds."

" 'Bout this mare, you've bought too," Martin had wandered after them and came to the bay. " She's all right until she tires, then she stops. Val found her too safe. But she goes quite a long way sometimes, she does really."

" There's nothing like variety," said Tommy bitterly.

CHAPTER II

BARRY MAGUIRE remarked that "there was an end to everything, and his had nearly come." The size and shape of his unopened mail occasioned the remark which he made on the same morning in August on which Tommy had grumbled to Trevor about his legacy.

Mrs. Maguire, a hard-faced woman, with a skin tanned chrome colour, and a mass of coarse chestnut hair pulled into a granite knot, growled to herself.

"You daren't open the gate but you'd have a bailiff on top of you," said Barry bitterly. "They have had the decency every other year to let me hunt, but they won't do it this, or let me have meal for the dogs either."

The dirty dust-clouded windows at Castleton Maguire were closed to the soft August day. The long room, with breakfast laid in it, was crammed with heavy furniture, a streak here and there showing that Mary Kateen, the housemaid, had flapped a duster. A litter of riding-whips, spurs, flasks, cartridges, rat-traps, and many other things were piled on the sideboard, leaning against unpolished silver cups, which set forth that Mr. B. Maguire's Tally was the winner for three years of the Kilanour lightweight cup, and that M. B. Barry's Lady Mary had done the same. Breakfast was flung rather than laid on a yellowing cloth. Half a dozen eggs were piled in a broken china hen. Thick slabs of home-cured bacon were heaped on a silver dish, which was tarnished to the hues of black and green. A great soda loaf was faced by a meagre pat of butter. Some brilliant red jam stood in its pot. The dingy smeared windows looked out on one side on to a square patch of grass where a few flowers still straggled through weeds; humps, with thick riot of dock and groundsel, marked some old flower-beds. A twisted unpruned rose flung melancholy branches across the window, darkening it, tapping eerily when the wind was on that side. At the far end of the untended square, in front of some roughly clipped laurels, a medley of colour flamed. Poppies, asters, cornflowers, nasturtiums climbing the laurels, an edging of blue violas. The second window, which was a little dirtier than the other, looked on to a melancholy courtyard, its paving full of grass and weeds; the roofs of its buildings half slateless, made weatherproof with quaint patchings of corrugated iron and timber. A dilapidated motor-car stood under the huge archway leading into the yard, and half a dozen thin misshapen hound puppies blinked in the sunshine or strayed looking for food. They were gaunt little beasts, their ribs showing hooplike through their rough coats.

"I tell you there's an end," said Barry, taking the whole of the pat of butter on to his plate, balancing it on a piece of bread so that it might not melt as he heaped up the thick greasy cooked bacon. "An end to the pack," he muttered, "and Barry Maguire as Master."

"That your great-grandfather kept," snapped his mother icily. "The Kilanour hounds are as old——"

"As the days we had a bit of money," remarked Barry bitterly. "Those two girls are helping the house by staying in bed as usual." A long shrill whistle sounding outside, he added, "All but Tirrie."

"An' she's wasting her money on these flowers." Mrs. Maguire glared at the bright patch. "Pennies here and sixpences there, and coaxing Barty Dooly out when our backs are turned to help her. Juliet and Dahlia tell me."

Barry replied that anyhow Tirrie was all they had to live on and it was not enough now. He ate on with the tell you—so go easy." The fairness brought another burst of anger. James Maguire had utilized his deathbed liberty and left his money, securely tied up, to Tiranogue, his daughter. Two hundred a year to be paid for her education, then when she came to be fifteen she could demand the whole sum to hunt and amuse herself. Should Tiranogue die the legacy lapsed to his cousin, Frankie O'Grady of Killeen. Tiranogue to have complete control on her marriage.

" The capital," Florence Maguire mouthed, " that was wanting to slate and improve and buy stock—the money Barry wanted."

" Well, that was just what he heard," remarked Riley. " If a Maguire gets it," he said, my mother's money will be gone in five years, but may be the man that marries a Maguire might have some sense and keep it. Go tie it up, Mat." He laughed then. He laughed when he died. " Good Joke " he was muttering at the last.

When Mrs. Maguire had finished another outburst the lawyer said thoughtfully that he did not wonder James had passed away so peacefully and got up.

Law was irrevocable. The money belonged to the very small baby in the next room and the capital would never be available for a Maguire to waste.

Barry walked to manhood along a flowery path, crossed here and there with small dykes called school.

Tormented governesses strove with him and his sisters for a time. He then went to a cheap college and left in six months and went to another and left that. He learned to shoot more than excellently, to throw a perfect line, to sit as gracefully on a horse as his short legs would allow. He was a round-shouldered, sloppy-looking youth with an expression of good nature tempered by a shyness. Red-faced and pudgy-nosed, but a sugary voice and guileless blue eyes redeemed him from being quite commonplace. Few people would have recognized him out of riding breeches and a badly washed stock.

The shattered walls of Castletown bordered two big estates, the owners learning to dread Master Barry Maguire as he poked his way to manhood. No cleverer poacher than young Barry was to be found in Ireland. He knew the exact hour when Tierney, the head-keeper at Cregan's Castle, took his tea and when Mat went his rounds. If a keeper came in view too soon after a gun had cracked, the Master of the Kilanours was over to look at the main earth or to speak about a hole where a fox had got to ground a week before. Barry's gun was probably dumped quite close and he said that he had just heard some one shooting. He was never caught. Colonel Callan prided himself on his pheasants. At the other side, Lord Kilanour also reared partridges, so that the larder at Castletown was seldom empty. Barry could put down snares, creeping through the undergrowth as stealthily as an Indian, and lift them as the dawn flushed the sky. He was known, but never openly detected. Colonel Callan declared that the Maguire's were not above removing sheaves of corn for their horses, his diminished mysteriously, that was a matter between Barry and the piece of elastic called a conscience.

At thirty-two he looked like a boy of twenty-two, his round red face unlined and his red hair but slightly toned down. This was the history of the reigning Maguire.

" And now when the hounds go so will chances," said Barry. " Master have privileges," he supped tea as noisily as one of his own hounds. And Florrie Maguire went back to the awful hour in her bedroom and the horror of the will.

There were two things she had not heard then.

It was when young Martin Riley, shambling downstairs, had stood to speak to his groom and Mary Kate, the family factotum.

" I don't wonder the creature was glad to be off," he remarked thoughtfully. " And Tiranogue, the name will be great if it keeps the girl young with that huckster to rear her."

He drove off, looking up at a white maddened face pressed to a window in the second story.

"If you had your rights," she said, looking round the dirty room; the pain of that minute's revelation as fresh as when it came to her. She had been so sure, the will in her bureau. But for Tiranogue's inopportune arrival . . . it would have been right enough.

"Well I haven't," said Barry, "and we mayn't even have Tirrie to live on always. That Frankie is smelling round guessing something. There was a night when Mat Riley wasn't too sober. If she married I tell you. But the hounds must go, mamma, anyhow. No one'll trust me for meat. A dead horse won't be left without the money. And I went into Hayes, only last Saturday, to order a new red coat, the old one being purple. 'And no red coats,' says he, 'till I see the red money.' The scoundrel, that was supported by my father and his father, made a man of by my grandfather. Red money, I said, and nothing but dirty notes about. 'Why didn't you go fight Master Barry,' he says. 'Why didn't you,' I answered. 'Hadn't I my business to mind,' he snaps. 'And hadn't I my place,' I gave him back, but wanting the coat I cooled and offered him the Golden Maid filly that has a crooked leg, for his boy to ride, for coat and breeches. He didn't close and I didn't like the look in his eyes either," ruminated Barry, "for the last time the bailiffs came there wasn't an animal here but the hounds, an' I to swear I'd have to run hunting them. Letting that backyard to Martin was no bad dodge," said Barry cheerfully. "But for that, I was done."

"There'll be some one over to claim the filly now," said Mrs. Maguire. "With your folly, Barry, Greene will come."

"I can tell Neddy Greene through the gate, how I tried to do Dayly," said Barry unmoved. "If I could sell the hounds even—or get some fool to take them——"

Florence Maguire, now eating a sparse breakfast, advised immediate advertising. As far away as Barry could. Her hard face brightened. There were always men looking for hounds to hunt and if the Kilanour county was a little woody it was sporting. On Barry's remarking that it would be if they had foxes, Mrs. Maguire thought hopefully that a fox or two might be found if the claims were paid again.

"The people used to get sour when no one gave them anything," she said.

Barry made a languid remark concerning nothing to give. "That dam Dayly will surely spread that I have horses," he muttered as he lighted a pipe, puffing out strong smelling tobacco into the dusty close room.

A door banged assertively and Tiranogue walked into the room.

Tiranogue had grown up slight and tall. She was badly dressed in the cheapest of clothes, and at first sight was frankly plain. Her very small pale face seemed overcrowded by her grey-green eyes and an enormous quantity of black soft hair was bundled into the smallest space it could be pinned into. Her hands were red and brown, and her feet almost slipped out of a pair of Dahlia's old shoes.

Florence Maguire's eyes lighted almost malignantly.

"As usual, late, Tirrie," she snapped. "Eat your breakfast."

Tirrie omitted to say that she had breakfasted at eight with Mary Kate and Mary Kateen in the kitchen. Old Mary Kate was owed so much wages and knew as she termed it the "ins and outs" so well, that Mrs. Maguire did not dare to restrict kitchen food, so that something was always kept for Tirrie. To-day she had had fresh eggs and hot bread, but her mother did not know of it.

Tirrie looked thoughtfully at the pale tea which her mother had slopped out for her. Her glance at the butter-dish was pungent and if her signature had not been wanted that morning she would have walked out again as she often did before an outburst of rage.

"Nothing good enough for you," her mother said bitterly, removing the jampot. . . . "Very resentful you are because there's no money to get you girls caviare and oysters."

The unsuitability of the food for breakfast was not as patent to Tirrie as it ought to have been to people who had partaken of the delicacies.

"And Barry going without a red coat," burst out Mrs. Maguire, looking lovingly at her lumpy son. "While you spend every farthing on posies out there in the border."

Tirrie had learnt the eloquence of silence. Two prolonged yawns echoed behind her as she nibbled her bread.

Juliet and Dahlia Maguire, with the sleepy looks of the riser who has eschewed a tub, slouched into the room.

Juliet wore a dressing jacket which had once been a flaunting blue. Dahlia's blouse dreamt of sunlight soap as our prisoners dreamt of England.

Both girls' foreheads were surrounded by hair wavers and their expressions discontented.

Juliet poured out the pallid tea with a perky nose up like a retriever scenting game, quested for the jampot. Dahlia demanded butter.

Both were silent before the tirade concerning poverty and the luckiness of those who got bread and jam, and both glared at the empty bacon dish.

"And if I did get fellows to come here," burst out Barry, "a nice looking pair they'd be to give them appetites at breakfast, so they would."

Dahlia, listening to a clatter in the yard and the fierce tongue throwing of hounds, wished that she was in the pack because she'd get food. She commenced an animated and well-known attack concerning Barry having everything, and as usual omitted to finish it when she caught her mother's eye.

Tirrie went out of the room. She wanted to dig in the garden, to see the young horses, and play with the hound puppies. All this, with help given to the young and old Mary Kate, kept Tirrie's days full.

Florence Maguire followed her.

Tirrie knew nothing of her legacy. Every few months she signed certain papers without looking at them, which she believed to bring in a very few pounds, all going in the expenses of some lawsuit in which she was involved. Mat Riley had intended originally to tell Tiranogue of her fortune, but his business had drifted away from him, he liked hunting better than work and was pinched. He found as Tirrie grew up that there was always a mount for him at Kilanour and a present of game to take home. He paid out the two hundred a year, and invested the balance until Tirrie came to be fifteen and then he looked dubiously at her first signed demand of her full income.

Curiously enough when Barry brought it, it appeared that he had backed an outsider for the Cambridgeshire for Mat Riley. Then in the course of conversation they decided that Tirrie knew enough as to her legacy. After a short struggle Riley allowed the matter to knot itself into a tangle which was soon too involved to unravel. Outsiders were mysteriously found. They started at very long odds when Tirrie at times wanted some of her accumulated capital, for at this Riley jibbed badly. His fellow-trustee was dead, no other appointed, and the whole drifted, with Tiranogue's small income, patching up the rotten fabric of the Maguires' finance until when Tirrie came to be twenty, there was nothing but the patches with the bare cold skin of poverty peering through everywhere else.

Tirrie was kept in short frocks. She was encouraged to think herself ugly. No one seemed to want to marry the elder girls who were pretty when they dressed properly, so that Florence Maguire comforted herself with the thought that no one was at all likely to take a fancy to Tirrie in her cast-off clothes.

" Will you sign this paper at once, Tirrie," she said, following the girl. " More about that lawsuit we are spending our last penny on because your father couldn't leave things straight."

" If it's costing money," said Tirrie, " I don't know why it's not stopped."

Tirrie's voice was soft, with very little of the Cara drawl in it. The lodge-keeper's wife at Callan Castle was English. Making a pet of the neglected child she laid stress on the importance of an accent and Tirrie had taken heed.

Mrs. Maguire said that what couldn't be got out of must be done, as she laid down a paper for the girl to sign.

Tirrie looked at it thoughfully.

" But if there's no butter or bacon and this is money going out, I can help by not signing," she said, putting down the pen.

Mary Kate in the kitchen, hearing the outburst, observed to Mary Kateen, " That one day the Missus'd bring the crazy owld slates down off the house-top an' she ragin' ! "

" There is quare work with Miss Tirrie," said old Mary Kate, " for it's only after she lays her name to paper that the Missus has a penny. Let ye up now, Kateen, an' ask for a month or two's wages, an' put in a phizzant for the child's bite of dinner. There's chops for Master Barry, an' the two young ladies going out."

Tirrie's pale cheeks grew pink as her mother raged. She was told that she was ungrateful, rebellious, impossible, and, as she trailed her legible ill-written signature, she wondered why she was always wrong.

" It's because of the money," she said sullenly, " for no one cares enough for me to want to get it for me. Is it much, mother ? "

This was the first direct question which Tirrie had ever asked. Florence Maguire quailed visibly, but Tirrie did not see her mother's face.

" Because if it was a hundred pounds, I'd buy Marty O'Grady's grey that whistles, and enough to feed him for a year," said Tirrie, handing her mother the signed paper.

She ran off to the yard, where old Shamus, Mary Kate's husband, was cleaning out the kennels and young Barty helping. The great enclosed square of the stable-yard was grass grown ; the stable doors lolled open, rotting off their hinges, save the hounds there was no sign of life. Barry put up the dining-room window.

" Keep the gate locked, Shamus," he called out gloomily.

" He is afeared of Andy McGill, the new bailiff," said Shamus thoughtfully. " He has a blasht of the north in him, Miss Tirrie, and they say is not too aisy to besht. But beyant the dogs——" Barty looked round the empty echoing yard. " Only, if he lighted on the little door," he whispered softly, " there might be a question axed about Mr. Riley's yard . . . an' what's in it."

Shamus' son Barty appeared through the door to say to Tirrie that he would have the Sunshine filly saddled when all'd be out as it was a great day for a school.

" Wisha God keep the light heart in ye always, child," said old Shamus gently as Tirrie danced on the stone trough of the pump.

Florence Maguire called out to her son to come to her. No one would give them credit, and her futile brain having seen a gap in the fence she wanted to get over and away.

The advertisement must be written at once.

With many alterations it was at last set forth, " The

Kilanour hounds require a Master. In one of the most sporting counties in Ireland. Plenty of foxes," etc.

"There is no need to say the plenty is twenty miles off," groaned Barry, as he tore the sheet of paper up.

"That old crank Kilanour might see it," he said. So finally it appeared that a noted West of Ireland pack wanted a Master immediately. House and stables arranged by the gentleman resigning; and Florence Maguire took it to post at Killone.

She rode her bicycle there, going first to Riley's dilapidated office to extract her money.

Mat Riley was sitting dejectedly at his desk, writing a few processes. He paid with an air of unwillingness which he always put on, and took a pair of rabbits without gratitude. Fictitious horses did not win so often for him now.

"One of these days I must see that girl," he said gloomily. "If I were to die I don't know who'd undo the muddle Florence, and not another cent of capital will I give you for her, let her ask away." Yet he knew he was too deeply involved to refuse very much, as the owner of Barry's backyard as well as other things. "Rabbits taste of rabbits," he added gloomily, seeing Florence to his dirty steps.

Mrs. Maguire, after a visit to the bank, went straight to Dayly the tailors, emerging with flushed cheeks, but a coat had been commenced for Barry.

Tirrie at Castletown listened to the minute storm which marked the robing of her sisters. The calls for Mary Kateen, the clattering of doors and the incessant shrilling of voices, they came down, two pretty overdressed girls, to pick their way through the yard and past an old cart to a well-covered little door, into the other yard.

Here Barty was harnessing a weedy pony to a yellow dogcart, and Juliet and Dahlia made their way perilously across a grass track to the road.

Acc. No: 1823.

" We'll be able to take the hounds out now," said Barty, " an' school the mare, Miss Tirrie. Mr. Barry is away to the river."

A bang came at the big gate and a fierce voice demanded its opening. Barty, climbing up a ladder, peered through a spy-hole.

" Arrrah. It's the new bailiff, McGill," he said carelessly. " Loose out the dogs, pappy, and he won't wonder we can't hear him call."

The hounds poured out with a crash of tongues. Fifteen couple of splay-footed, throaty, slack-loined brutes, wild as hawks.

Shamus allowed them to rage about until McGill, cursing volubly, drove away.

Then they slipped through the door and out across the field on to the road, leaving the hounds in the yard. " Exercise enough for them," said Barty philosophically.

CHAPTER III

TOMMY BLACKBURN snipped three advertisements out of the Club copy of the *Field* to read them over at his leisure.

" Bones, there's this Scotch pack."

Trevor observed that the Scotch were so very knowing.

" They'll kind of see through your bank balance and see it's a one year's only," he said.

Martin, waking with an effort, inclined to Scotland.

" Hilly, but genuine," he said sleepily.

Here Tommy said petulantly that he hated riding when at one moment he could not see his horse's head, and at the next feel that its ears were the only thing to prevent him slipping on its tail.

" See-saw on four legs," said Tommy.

Trevor thought that it might be especially awkward when the see-saw bolted, and paused, seeing it was a painful subject, but they could write to the Secretary.

London roared by in seething Piccadilly, the whiff of petrol stung the still air.

" There's a Welsh one," said Martin. " Master wanted for the Llan something. They pronounce it Clan by the way. That might do."

" And this Irish," Tommy read the advertisement, compiled by Barry Maguire.

" There's a straightforward whiff about that," said Trevor. " No longer able to keep them. Lost his legs in Flanders probably."

Martin awoke completely, as he objected to Ireland. They were always expecting you to laugh over there, and they might raid one for arms or do something awful at any moment.

He drew over a sheet of paper and wrote tersely to the Secretary in Wales, while Tommy indicted a straggling epistle to Box 4, The *Field* Office, asking full particulars.

" Y'see I haven't done much hunting," he said, " which may make 'em chary. A few days at the Woolwich drag and a little after rats isn't altogether credentials."

The three went out to stroll in the Park, where they met the Misses Warings. Violet talked of sport enthusiastically, ending the afternoon by a visit to Tommy's two new purchases and a plea for a ride on one of them next day.

The grey bloomed in his box, looking hard and well. The mare had already run a little light. The dun, poked into a stall at the end of the corridor, rattled his chain philosophically and whinnied at Tommy as if he knew his master.

Tommy promised a ride gladly. He doubted all bad tales about the grey, and that animal trotted and cantered soberly, bending his head to Violet's light touch on the bits. The bay mare felt too corky even to stop, and Tommy chattered happily, forgetting that futurity could exist.

" They must get five or six more. They would whip their own hounds."

Tommy talked with the reckless carelessness of a man who could sign cheques at his pleasure, and Violet regretted that she had nothing to sell to him.

A motor bus rattled down towards Kensington as they neared the road; the grey caught hold of his bits, surging forward for a few lengths, Violet remarking that he could pull when he liked. The set of the grey's head had made Tommy feel nervous.

The little dun jogged about with surprisingly light action, his fiddle head cocked up gaily and his scanty tail curved at a gay angle.

Next day Sir Martin received an answer from Wales, and took his motor to go down with the idea of getting back that night. They swung out to Chester, lunching there, and then along the wide roads until they drove among the Welsh hills, wooded or rising gauntly in endless array, the high crag of Penmaenmaur could be seen as they turned one crest. Among loops of mountain roads they went astray to work back along the coast and drive at last through a white gate and up to a long low house, the sea crooning in the distance; and to be received by a bland little man who directed them to an inn. He had no rooms and was dining out. He had expected them early.

The inn was a grey stone blocky little place, chilly outside and stuffy in. The chops of Welsh mutton tasted principally of active sheep, and the pastry, Sir Martin thought, must have been chipped off the rocks on the shore.

The leaden feeling ensuing on this meal and a night's fitful sleep on hard little beds brought the three out in the morning feeling that all hounds must be beyond them; an impression deepened by the imposing style of the kennels, and the secretary's blandly careless remarks as to the expense.

"Heaps of foxes," he said. "Country of course a bit hilly. Those hang new factories too get in the way, but there are some nice bits of going, and it doesn't cost a great deal."

Tommy, with the easy air of a millionaire, wanted to know how much roughly it would cost him to do the thing well.

Mr. Apjones thought that the M.F.H.'s expenses need not exceed three thousand, but—here he eyed Tommy—of course they wanted some one who could show them sport. No doubt Blackburn had done substitute during the war for——" here Mr. Apjones paused, and the Woolwich drag did not seem the thing to mention at the moment.

"One fellow who took it over had his brother to whip him," said the secretary. "Now that Hughes is back he is more or less a fixture, we'd put that in. He stays."

Tommy was suffering from indigestion. He drew himself up. Trevor was to be whip.

"It's not quite what I was at," he said grumpily. "Not enough scope in the country, d'ye see. I'm after a big pack, but seeing this—we came along."

Mr. Apjones had been waiting for some of the usual questions he said slowly that he had thought so.

"Fellow who asks nothing doesn't mean to fix on," he said pleasantly. "And Major Hughes, our old Master, has just wired, so it's as well. If you fellows will have a mutton chop."

Tommy's move towards the car was full of determination. The Rover sped Londonwards at a pace which was not within the bounds of the law. Apjones, talking it over, wondered what country this Blackburn had hunted in.

"He wouldn't give anything away. The hills finished him, and he was evidently looking for a big thing," he said to Hughes. "He and a Sir Martin Fitz Hughes and a fellow called Trevor."

"Knew a Blackburn in France," said Hughes; "a gunner, who told me his ambition in life was to hunt hounds, but he had never tried it."

The secretary grunted.

A very large envelope with a large crest on the flap awaited Tommy at the Club. The postmark was Killone. The address, Castletown Maguire.

Barry's handwriting was not his strong point, also it took up a great deal of space.

He had commenced Dear Mr. Blackburn, and scratched out the Mr.

He proffered the Mastership of the Kilanours rather baldly.

"About a circle of twenty-five miles, touching the West Mulderry's at Caherelly Bog, the East Caras at Killone." "Leave out the sea on the other side," his mother had said, "and the Black Mountains at the North."

"Some woodland but principally open light country." There's nothing lighter than slates and stones had been Barry's comment. "Seldom a day they hadn't a hunt. The Master was welcome as regards lodging to half of Castletown and all the stables he wanted, fine airy loose boxes, and a great kennell (the second *n* crossed out). "Twenty-two couple of hounds mixed; he enclosed the book. A nice entry of puppies. And it all cheap," wrote Barry. "There are lots of nice horses about to be bought reasonable. Oats is plenty and so is straw. A fellow next door can give you all your hay cheap too and it's sweet hay. There's a good saddler at Killone, not Dayly, he's a robber for writs, but Hennessy in Mill Lane. You might do better and you might do worse. Come over and look but come quick if you're bitting."

"He means biting," said Sir Martin thoughtfully, looking over Tommy's shoulder, his spelling is doubtful. Kennel is good too."

"Biting," read Tommy, "becos there's another after them. Wire if you're coming so as to have a car or two to meet the train.

Yours truly,
BARRY MAGUIRE."

"If he can talk of a car or two he cannot be giving them up on account of poverty," said Trevor. "Wounded I expect, poor devil. On crutches likely."

Sir Martin was completely against it. They must go to Scotland. It wasn't so easy to pick up horses where every man was picking them up at the same time, and as they were going to make fools of themselves and blue all their money, much better get value.

His remonstrances were unheeded by Tommy and Trevor, both of whom were full of the idea of making a batch of four-year-olds, and with their proceeds, most of the winter's expenses.

" By having two out a day four-year-olds will go fine," said Tommy, " and if we buy them right they ought to sell for a good price here. M.F.H.'s lots always do," he added in lordly tones.

Here Martin remarked that they would think it a queer old M.F.H. who rode nothing but four-year-olds. He then lapsed into apparent somnolence, breathing sleepily, an occasional quiver of the closed eyelids noting that he was listening carefully to them.

" Ten, twelve horses, get 'em for fifty apiece. Sell 'em for three hundred easily."

Martin turned a sigh into a snore.

" Lots of money to go on with. If legs undid me they may make me," said Tommy.

A telegram was handed to Martin.

" The Scotch pack's gone," he said languidly. " Better take quarters and do our season in the Vale."

Tommy replied that he would be an M.F.H. or nothing. Now that he had been bitten with the idea he wanted to do his own damning and not be held hard by Aunt Eliza's legs.

Martin thought this was involved to outsiders, and Trevor chimed in to say he wanted to learn to hunt hounds too.

" There'll be lots of days when old Tommy's laid up with broken collar-bones and bruises," he said cheerily, " when I'll hunt the hounds."

Tommy's expression showed that the idea did not exactly please him.

Martin, who knew all about it, said nothing. He had carried the horn for his uncle for a whole season.

The result of it all was a telegram dispatched to Castletown Maguire, and a scurry to the tailor's to get clothes.

Tommy tied them down to severity. No swallow tails for whips. They ordered three pink coats, exacting promises that they should be ready in a week, and the endlessness of a hunting man's wants helped to exhaust petrol.

String gloves, leather gloves, ties, new boots, saddles, flasks, whips, spurs, wire nippers, hunting horns. They were at it next day, sniffing the clean smell of leather, the pleasantly raw one of cloth, Tommy buying recklessly, the others carefully.

His horse clothing was all check with a large T.B., emblazoned in pale blue. The pile grew so alarmingly large that Martin urged him to leave bandages and smaller items to the excellent Mr. Hennessy, if they went to Ireland, and to some one else if they didn't.

Sir Martin's valet, a lean and reserved man who detested discomfort, asked gloomily if Ireland had been finally decided on and omitted giving notice until he was certain.

When rung up on the phone by his late aunt's lawyer, Tommy answered with curt recklessness.

"What's that, you Greyling ? I'm off. Spending it all on legs. You beg me to be careful. I mean to be. Hope to make 'em pay, Greyling. Pass 'em on at a profit, d'ye see, the good-looking ones. He's rung off," said Tommy pleasantly. "I think he choked ? Never heard of a horse in his life 'cept as something to draw a carriage or a van."

The telegram brought by Larry the Hare—the name owned by the postmistress's son because of the pace he had when running away from the gamekeepers—put Castletown in an uproar.

Mrs. Maguire read the wire, declaring dramatically that their fortunes were made, but who would stay in such a house. She immediately dusted the chimney-piece so vigorously that she knocked down Barry's pipe.

"Three idle girls that won't do a hand's turn," screamed Florence Maguire shrilly. "Look at that. One might be in a fog off the Lizard with the dust, and how I'll get it ready in time, I don't know."

Dahlia, coughing briskly, wondered if Cassidy's would give credit for stuffs for a few evening dresses.

"And the darn in the knee of my habit is given again," said Juliet sadly.

Barry groped for his pipe, swearing without softness until Mary Kateen announced that Larry the Hare wouldn't wait another minute for the answer, seeing he had to be back to belt a coffin over to O'Callaghan's before the night fell on him.

Barry wrote feverishly:

"Major Thomas Blackburn,
Naval and Military Club,
London.

"Will be delighted to see you all on ——," "this is Wednesday. Could you have the house scraped at all by Tuesday next, Mama?"

"If I got Mrs. Sweeney in," said Mrs. Maguire, "and Mrs. Talty and left over everything else, and the girls helped, we might."

Tiranogue had sat without saying a word, the whole thing made her feel bitter. The lean hounds had seemed part of her life. She had exercised them. Brought up the puppies, nursed the sickly underbred little beasts through distemper, and wept over them when they lay limp and dead. When a mount came her way she had watched Eager or Dainty or Dragon as they towled and yowled on the line. Tirrie had often begged meal from old Connellan, a red-faced, white-bearded giant, of a singularly timorous nature, who invariably gave in and supplied food for the pack, trusting to the Lord God above him for indefinite payment.

Barry had long ago exhausted distant firms who at first had blithely sent tons of stuff to an M.F.H.

The last lot of meal, all trust abolished, had been got in exchange for a yearling thoroughbred with a crooked foreleg, coupled with an indifferent two-year-old heifer.

Tiranogue clasped her small thin hands over her shabbily draped knees and listened to the storm which raged through the room.

Outside Larry the Hare was demanding one-and-six for delivery and largesse for coming so quickly.

"Makin' me way through the Lords, what might cost me me liberty," he piped from the echoing hall.

Florence Maguire produced a threepenny-piece and two pennies ill-humouredly.

"Give him sixpence, Kateen," she said, "and tell him he could have come by the road."

Tea on a battered tray, innocent of a cloth, had just been brought in. Barry drank his as he thought things out, but his mother flapped round the room dusting violently, flinging the clutter of whips and game bags, bandages, and bottles on the sideboard into worse disarray, raising a bitter acrid cloud.

Barry said patiently that when she'd finished being like a chicken that was wanted for dinner, and ceased to make the room like the Killone road on March Fair Day, they might talk.

Dahlia and Juliet whispered of new clothes to each other, and Mrs. Maguire subsided, coughing.

"The two west rooms are the driest, and the blue room isn't bad," she said hopefully. "With good wood fires in them and the old lace drawing-room curtains, pinned across to keep out daylight, so that they won't have too good a look at the carpets. The beds are all sound there. I'd have put one in the pink room, but Tirrie had the sick pups there last year and they ate the ends out of the bedpost."

"When they were getting well," observed Tiranogue.

"But those three will do and the men's rooms will be well enough if we move the apples. I might find a dry corner, elsewhere. They'll make us, Barry," breathed Mrs. Maguire, her hard cheeks scarlet.

"They will if they stay," said Barry. "Foxes," he grunted.

A distant banging took him to the window looking into the yard. Some one was thumping at the outer gate.

"It's that Northerner," said Barry, thinking he might catch us unlatched in the night time. "I'll stave off a bit of that account when I sell the two cows to-morrow. No one knows they're mine, luckily."

"If you went into the kitchen," muttered Mrs. Maguire, "it's not what's wanting but what isn't. Dan Loughnane stopped giving me credit a year ago."

"And what about servants," said Dahlia placidly. "Who'll wait at table. Mary Kateen only runs round like a rabbit in front of a terrier."

This question involved a visit to the kitchen. The vast old room was a melancholy document of past greatness. The solitary lamp lighted up a great range, cracked and out of order. The floor was sunken and uneven. Flotsam and jetsam unending lurked in the dark cobwebby corners. A flour bin, now used for horse clothing—the harness-room roof leaked badly—the girls' boots; sets of harness hung up. Saddles on stands; chicken coops, one with a brood in it; old saucepans, empty bottles. The huge dresser stood out in its spotlessness, the top shelves glittering with golden coppers, polished brass candlesticks; winking lower down the remnants of the Worcester set showing its gallant flare of blue and scarlet and gold. Old Toby jugs which Mary Kate refused to part with hung on the hooks, cheek by jowl with those of fine china and mere commoners from

Killone. The table was scrubbed snow white and Mary Kate was putting a loaf into a three-legged oven to bake it with wood ashes and turf. The old oven could not be heated without coal or even with it for the top was cracked.

Mary Kate was gnarled but not withered, broad but thin, and as light on her feet as a robin. She wore an old-fashioned quilted cap framing her apple red old face, and two blue eyes which had never lost their brightness. One cannot scold a servant who could claim perhaps twenty years' wages, so that Mrs. Maguire might fume, but seldom got her way in the kitchen.

Mary Kate raised her head from the recesses of an old flour-bin to remark tersely that the flour was out on them.

" An' when I questioned young Tracy all he said was that so was their bill," remarked Mary Kate, walking to the spotless table, where she commenced to mix flour and sour milk into dough.

Mrs. Maguire said pleasantly that soon there would be enough of everything.

" Unless Master Barry'd be as handy to snhare an heiress as he can a robbit," said Mary Kate. " How will that be, Ma'am ? "

The old woman listened to the scheme of the hounds. She thought it over, ruminated, and cackled harshly, with true Irish delight at scoring off a stranger.

" There should be money in it," she said tersely. " Money on all they gets, but unless the young ladies turns around the work could not be done, ma'am, as you well know. If Mary Kateen has six bedrooms to do an' sitting-rooms to dust proper, some one must come to wait."

Mrs. Maguire thought uncomfortably. So many servants had left with their wages unpaid that she knew it would not be easy to get one. Before the war they had striven to keep up some little state at Castletown Maguire ; sometimes a maid, sometimes a man to open the door and wait.

Tirrie had followed her mother to the kitchen. She put the three-legged oven on the top of the range for Mary Kate with a deftness born of practice. Her small face was set in hard lines. The parting with the hounds hurt her sorely.

She turned now, staring at her mother.

"I'll wait," she said briefly. "Mary Kate will teach me, and I don't want to know your horrid stranger men."

Florence Maguire snorted because it was a lifelong habit to snort at any suggestion of Tiranogue's. Then her face cleared. It would keep the girl out of the way, prevent any fear of her proving attractive to the strangers. The only blot on the fair page of the scheme was mopped up for her.

"I'll wait—if—you give me the chestnut filly for my own," said Tirrie firmly, "and a signed receipt for her so that Barry cannot sell her when I'm out. I didn't say I wanted to hunt her," this after her mother's outburst, "but I want to keep her for my own. I'll wait and dust the sitting-rooms, and lay tables and sit in my dog-hole if its left to me for myself."

Barry, slopping through his ill-fitting brown clothes, grinned at the idea of the bargain. He gave Tirrie the filly, a leer in his eyes as she signed the formal receipt because he meant to take the little mare back if she should even prove to be of use.

The Ladylove filly was a chestnut in the book, which Barry had bought for two pounds ten at an auction. Strangles had nearly killed the poor little brute as a two-year-old, and Tiranogue had sat with her for days coaxing her to eat and feeding her with milk until she recovered. She was now four, a lanky, lean mare with a ewe neck and missing a rib, but with deep girth and with great second thighs, and a good shoulder.

"But if they don't settle to stay and you don't pay by working the deal is off," said Barry, grinning again as his half-sister flushed and winced. " In return for working you see, Tirrie, I put that down."

He slouched out, round-shouldered, stumpy, ill-clothed, but his mother's eyes followed him with adoration.

" And there's something for you to sign, Tirrie," her mother said, almost amiably. " I really believe that case for your little bit of money will be over soon."

" If it's not I sign no more," said Tirrie quietly. " I said that the other day."

It was because of that remark that Florence Maguire had spoken civilly.

Tirrie followed her to the dusty dining-room, where her mother wrote rapidly, writing on one side and turning the paper over so that there was only a word or two for Tirrie to see. " Please—required, by bearer."

Tirrie had signed these papers for many years. She was saddened to-day and irritated, and she paused before she wrote her name, patting at the paper.

" What is it, mother ? Let me see if I can understand about law ? "

Then Tirrie quailed before an outburst concerning ingratitude and suspicion. She listened as her mother raved at her, too much accustomed to it to take much notice. Outsiders saw in Florence Maguire a good-humoured woman, leading a hard life ; striving against heavy poverty and greatly troubled by her youngest daughter's wildness. Tirrie would go nowhere, would do nothing in the house, would learn nothing. So Mrs. Maguire confided to her friends. It was a weariness, but without money what could one do ? The child ran wild. The savage temper which her daughters dreaded was kept down in public. Florence passed for one who strived and pinched vainly for ungrateful children.

" With me working all these years to get you this hundred pounds," Florence Maguire stormed, " and they trusting me till it's paid over for the costs, and to doubt me and to ask to read about it."

Tiranogue wrote her name quietly in silence. She slipped out of the room, her head bent a little.

Mrs. Maguire took up the paper with the feeling of physical exhaustion which ungoverned fury leaves. Her cheeks were flaming, she was a virago ; her coarse handsomeness vanished.

" If—she found out," she muttered, as she went for her bicycle. " An'—my boy."

Tirrie went down the rotting back staircase to the kitchen, and through the huge scullery piled with jars and bottles, baskets, and boxes, to the yard. It was bathed in hot sunshine, picturesque in its ruin. The lichens shone green and yellow and red dotted on the slates, the old unpruned roses growing against the walls had late blossoms on them. Decay which makes us sad in dripping rain is softened by sunlight. One of the hounds threw his tongue as he heard her step, but Tirrie did not go to them. She whistled to Snap, her dog, a liquid-eyed, red-coated mongrel, and went to one of the huge coach-houses. An old landau was drawn close to the back of it, a melancholy wreck, its wheels full of dry rot, its leather hanging in patches, a heap of dirty hay piled against it. Tirrie opened the door, slipped through, slid up a panel let into the wall behind the carriage and went through into the yard ostensibly let to Riley—where Barry kept all his horses and saddlery and his cows and forage.

Barty was cleaning out stables. Tirrie crossed the yard to the field beyond and put her arms round a lean chestnut horse's head.

" You're my very own now, Sweetheart," she whispered, stroking the soft velvet muzzle.

It was hot and peaceful out there. Tirrie sat on the grass, Snap putting his nose on her lap and the filly grazing daintily near by.

" You—you're fond of me, Snap," said Tirrie.

Looking into the faithful eyes she knew loneliness and a longing for love which made her eyelids smart. If her mother loved her as she loved Barry, if anyone did. Even Snappie might be taken from her should Barry lose his temper. Tirrie held the rough little brute close, hot tears dripping on to his coat, as he looked up trying to comfort her, licking her hands with his soft tongue, while the filly coming up nuzzled at Tirrie's bent head. If they could have been hers without fear of loss, the new spirit of loneliness might never have sprung up in Tiranogue's mind.

Tiranogue—the land of eternal youth—" I wouldn't like always to stay in this youth," said Tirrie aloud. " Oh, Frank ! "

Frank Maguire in sing-song brogue said that he had guessed where he would find his cousin.

Frank Maguire was a loose-limbed, red-faced youth with cunning blue eyes deep set behind thick black lashes. He had been dragged up in a cheap school, where, herded with well-to-do farmers' sons, he had acquired their ways veneered by the disagreeable feeling that he ought to be better than they were.

His tastes inclined to cross-road dances or better-class gaieties in Killone, to which he went furtively because his mother scolded and fumed. Out hunting he was equally furtive, airing a stained pink coat which had belonged to his father, aggressively clinging to equality with the county people and clumsily afraid of feeling completely happy when he talked to Pat Delane or Ned Hanratty.

" An' frettin'," he said, staring at Tirrie. " Fretting, Girsha."

The rough kindness in his voice brought smarting tears into Tiranogue's eyes. She was feeling for the first time the razor-edged blade of self-pity, which youth almost delights in touching until blood spurts, and which dulls so as we age or our mental skin so thickens, that the steel fails to hurt.

" I was just thinking I wouldn't like to stay young for ever," said Tirrie, believing that because she looked down no one could know she had been crying.

Frank Maguire eyed her shrewdly. It was only an hour before as he left his untidy house that his mother had talked of Castletown.

" No one ever saw the will," she said, " but I remember the last words James said to me. I slipped up to him. ' I've sold her mother,' he chuckled, ' and it's all for my baby.' I remember sneaking down the stairs, for Florence was working herself into a fever because she knew visitors were coming to the house, and she couldn't keep them out. The nurse came to tell one to creep."

So Frank kept on staring. If Tirrie was a surreptitious heiress. If there was any method of finding out.

At that moment Tirrie burst into a recital of her troubles, her mother's anger, and the folly of going on for ever looking for money which no one could ever get.

He sat down clumsily, his big badly booted feet stuck out, as he listened.

" Isn't it a queer thing now that I never heard tell of any law case," he said thoughtfully. You'd think it would be in some court or other, Tirrie, or on a newspaper."

" You see the next thing you sign," he counselled. " Turn it over somehow and I'll ask Tom O'Malley, that's a solicitor in Dublin, about it. Look, Tirrie ! read it."

Tirrie looked out at the medley of humping hills, some bare, some wooded thickly, some sparsely dotted with fir, blue in the haze of heat, as she remarked that Frank did not know her mother.

" The only person who's not afraid of her is Mary Kate. And if mother—only liked me a little," her lips quivered.

Frank possessed the slow cunning of those who depend on their own ideas, never having read of anyone else's. He chewed the cud of thought carefully. Why did Florence Maguire dislike poor little Tirrie ?

" You peep at the next paper anyways," he said, " an'

I'll ask. Get a weakness or any roguery so that her mind'll be off the writing."

Tirrie had a shrewd suspicion that even a death would not affect her mother, but she said nothing.

"But I've got Sweetheart here," she said, jumping up. "You remember, Frank, that if Barry steals her to sell, he's given her to me for doing some work."

"I'll follow him to Athlone to spoil the sale of her," said Frank with spirit, "and blackguard any man he offers the filly to."

"Did you steal a feed of oats for her, Barty," said Tirrie, walking back towards the stables.

"I does always," said Barty placidly. "An' I'll brin' her in unbeknownt now every night, Miss Tirrie. Oh Cripes, but that is perilous."

This as Tirrie clambered on to the filly, sitting with two badly stockinged slim legs on view below her shabby skirt and guiding the chestnut round the field with her voice and the pressure of her knees.

"She might win a race," said Tirrie, jumping off.

"She has two great ends on her," said Frank critically, "an' the rest is but bones yet."

He followed Tirrie when she went in to take lessons from Mary Kate in waiting at table. Chairs were ranged carefully, with Frank placed in one and Mary Kate directed shrilly and with decision.

"The left ear always, Miss Tirrie. The *left*, an' kape clear of it too. Now quick an' aisy with the soup. That's the fish. Now the ongtrees, an' let ye ask what they'll have, for there should be two.

"Chop or pig's head, Sir? Say it, Miss Tirrie. Then light things to be handed always. Or say chop or biled bacon for a head is big to hand. Now the roasts, an' run around without the plates. Surely Master Barry'll carve on the side-table—so just ax the question.

"Goose or robbit, Sir. Maybe I'm a bit confused, bein' the only things they do have above. Then the cabbage and potatoes, smart and quick. The left ear, Miss Tirrie, you'll hit the man next door that way. Plum puddin' or mince pies now. Very gintale in the silver dishes."

Tirrie took her lesson quite gravely, solemnly offering pig's head and chops, goose and rabbit. The only person she had ever lunched with was Frank's mother, where there was generally bacon and cabbage.

"I'll hate the steam on my nose," said Tirrie, "or Dahlia saying potatoes please. One thing, I needn't give them to her until I like to."

Here Tirrie sat down and laughed helplessly.

Florence Maguire came back in Larry the Hare's hack car, which was laden with packages. Brooms, dusters, monkey brand, soap, new towels, stores of tinned goods.

For four days Castletown seemed to echo to the swash of wet mops on boards, and the thump of brooms and clash of pails as the two helpers worked energetically, where they were being looked at, with the intervals of quiet as they rushed down for cups of tea.

The three old bedrooms were swept if not garnished, their threadbare carpets speckled over with badly cured rabbit skins, of which Shamus kept a stock, and which diffused an aroma of alum and pepper. The old damask curtains ripped and tore when they were shaken, and were patched by Dahlia or Juliet with many things which did not match. All the windows were shut to keep the damp out, and mattresses and bolsters steamed before wood fires. Downstairs Tirrie strove to excavate down to the silver on the mugs and cups, but worked hardest at a salver which she was to bring up herself. The silver was an heirloom, so could not be sold by Barry.

Everything jostled itself into a state of raw discomfort, with the strong trail of monkey brand mixing with the fumes of the rabbit skins, and the steam of drying hair and wool mixing with it all.

Tirrie was always glad to escape to her own room, a vast old place looking on to the yard. She had gathered up all the broken bits of furniture which she admired, and polished them for many years, so that, though Tirrie had no idea of it, she had treasures of many varieties.

The big room had been given to her to sleep in, but she had put her bed into a tiny room beyond it, and gathered her father's treasures into the large one. The chairs were exquisite Hepplethaite and Chippendale. The old tables were laden with valuable china and enamel boxes, but no one ever noticed them. Tirrie's room was so far away that her sisters did not come there. She would whisper to Shamus from her window and a half-rotted staircase led direct to the yard.

Amongst other things Tirrie had brought in all the pictures her father had possessed. One was an old man's head with eyes which seemed to follow one. Tirrie liked to peer at the dark painting, like life, with the criss-cross of veins and wrinkles, the sag of withered flesh about the chin, the texture of the velvet coat. Another, her favourite hanging over the mantelpiece, was of a lady in silk, one exquisite hand fingering an emerald brooch among the lace at the throat, another emerald on her third finger. Tirrie called her the jewelled lady, and loved the kind gentle face. There were stiff Dutch interiors, and some landscapes. Some dull blue china hung about, and vases of badly grown flowers everywhere.

Mary Kate saw that there was a fire there in the winter, for Tirrie practically lived in her own room.

Dahlia and Juliet delighted in wicker furniture, so that the smell of Aspinall's enamel mingled with the others in the house. Tirrie escaped from them all with a sigh of relief. She was formally installed as maid, dressed in an old black cashmere of her mother's, which was pinched and bunched until it filled. Aprons were produced from Killone with large caps, which Tirrie changed for small coronets.

Frank Maguire, having left Tirrie, rode to his home, a small square house approached by a straight, bleak avenue; as he rode he thought of his cousin.

"The way the old one hates there must be something to hate her about," ruminated Frank. "Maybe nothing can go to the other three and she's raging for that. Or——" A sudden blinding flash of light came to him, making him ride his bicycle against the wire palings.

"The very next time I'm in Dublin," he gasped, falling off. His mother looking down the avenue bitterly reviled the bad stuff they gave a man in the Killone bars.

Tirrie took daily lessons, dutifully repeating chops or bacon, and was oblivious of the fact that Dahlia had procured a cookery book, from which she was feverishly taking all the most ornate recipes.

CHAPTER IV

"THREE fools," remarked Martin Fitz Hughes languidly as he stood in the dawn steaming into Kingstown, "are better than one fool. They support each other a bit. Lord, I'm tired." The chill of the early morning which strikes keenly even on a summer's morning touched them rawly after the warmth of their cabins.

They nestled unshaven chins deep into their coat collars and, jostled by the crowd, watched Kingstown grow greyly distinct. A chill, cold rain lashed the steely sea, blurring all outlines.

Martin's man, a lean youth who was only gradually recovering his correct sphinx-like expression after four years' hard fighting, had been left to gather up bags and rugs and see to places in the train. Tommy carried a sharp-eyed, rough-haired white terrier with a high character as a varmint; Trevor a bundle of whips and a new saddle; and Martin was unburdened.

The big ship manœuvred her stately way to the pier. A place which for many years few will get on to without thinking of the sister-ship the *Leinster*, and the victims who had started so gaily to come back quietly in the wash of that heaving sea or carried in boats to their graves.

"Swines," said Tommy suddenly. "This place makes one remember them. Women and kiddies, an' poor boys who stood aside to save 'em."

The gangway went down with a deft slide, the crowd pushed and elbowed in the manner of crowds.

"Cahervalley Junction, right in front," Martin, who always appeared to walk more slowly than his companions and generally got to his destination in front of them, drifted up the long wind-swept wet quay, with the tang of salt in the air and the suck and splutter of the raging seas sounding farther out. White horses curveted on the steely waves, the clouds lowered ominously low; the moan of the coming storm was in the wind.

Brown had filled a carriage with their things, but the chill of the raw day depressed even Tommy, who began to wonder irritably if the long train would ever go on, or dawdle about all day as if time was of no account in Ireland.

" Going on ? " he queried of the affable collector. " Or do we stop here all day ? "

To this the man replied soothingly as one speaks to those of weak intellect, that if that train did not move there'd be a queer jumble with the eight o'clock from Westland Row, and shut the door quietly.

" Another of them poor crathurs with shell-shock," he remarked audibly to a fellow-collector. " If ye have that coach done Jamesy we might let her off."

Tommy, with heightened colour, cuddled down into his corner and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

The windows were thick with fine cold rain, it drove in a great flurry across the coast, blurring the sea.

" Thought there were fine cliffs," grumbled Tommy blinking out. " Big black rocks an' rollers swishing in, not a mud flat like this."

Martin remarked sleepily that this was only the suburbs of the seas, " Not the Atlantic," he murmured.

They slipped along past sleeping houses, clanking into Dublin, scuttling round the loop line past unlovely streets, deep into the bowels of the park to be honoured with the inevitable pull up outside Kingsbridge. The mist was settling to a downpour, sluicing off the top of the carriage, pattering on the tangle of metals; driving down the smoke from the engine until it hung in long wisps of grey festoons.

Peace had reinstated the breakfast car. There was no need to clamour for thick cups full of tea of the temperature peculiar to tea when one has three minutes to drink it in, accompanied by hard bread larded with something yellow in the refreshment-room.

Martin awoke to presume that it was always raining in Ireland, and to ask the guard if that was the case.

The guard, anxious to oblige a stranger with information, looked at the smoke-blurred rain-swept mists beyond the platform, and replied cheerily that yesterday and the day before were wet, so to-day should have a chance anyways. " When it isn't fine there does be a lot of rain," he said sapiently, adding with guard-like solicitude that he'd lock the door on them only it was a corridor train, but to call him if they were wishful for anything.

His big-hearted pleasantness caused Tommy to wonder if the official could conjure up hot water to shave with. " Dam fellow talks as if he couldn't fail. Hi, guard," snapped Tommy.

" Effect of the sea on his liver," said Martin to Trevor.

" He'll be all right presently ; the grey'll shake him up."

" You said if we were wishful for anything. I'm wishful to shave," said Tommy peevishly. " That's done him," he said, watching the big guard hurrying off. " Tip hunter."

Three minutes later the big man returned carrying a kettle. " I slipped it out of the kitchen an the man's back turned," he whispered cheerily. " It might make a bit of a delay on breakfast, but hand it back an ye done. The wather's lighting."

Tommy gave largesse with a subdued manner. He shaved before the train started, Brown producing his razor. The kettle was put outside, avoided by several passengers, but tripped over by the attendant, who picked it up with almost a yell.

"Spirited off the stove," he said, "an' the water boilin' for me own tea. An' out here now in the passage. Carty," he appealed to the guard just outside at the moment. "Will ye tell me how the big kettle got down here, and who snapped it from me?"

"To lay it out of your hand ye did, O'Keefe," said the guard in a soothing manner, listening with gentle interest to a further outburst concerning the likeliness of laying down kettles full of water to boil in the corridor, especially as he, Keefe, had only left the stove for two minutes to get the butter that was ready for him in a basket; the discussion being rounded up by the opinion that if Mike Carty believed that, he'd believe anything and was a dam fool anyways.

Mr. Michael Carty, the guard, winked softly at the driving rain. A signal made him suddenly alert. Heatedly telling Keefe not to belittle his betters, he waved his green flag. The mail starting on her long road south, went roaring into Kildare, Tommy trying to see the rain-shrouded fields and fences, peering through the dimmed glass.

The warmth of breakfast, of hot tea and bacon and eggs, roused them; Tommy's depression vanished. He was sure this was the finest country in the world out there if they could only see it. Green and green again. Big fields of pasture, fenced by those banks one read of, or by stone walls high but tempting.

The trickle on the window ceased to pour down, it remained in drops and blurs of wet. A gleam of pale sunshine lightened the massing clouds, they took tints of peace, soft silver edges fringing them. Where all had been a lowering mass they split into billows of vapour thinning, then massing, taking strange lights of opal and copper and ochre. Billowing again higher and higher, drawing back as one pulls a curtain aside, to show a glimpse of washed blue. Covering it again, lifting once more finally as a glow of sunlight poured out and the clouds trailed raggedly away split and organized. A beaten army, fleeing before their conquerors.

Tommy, Martin, and Trevor, the smoke of their pipes filling the carriage, had not watched the change until the last blur of wet was blown dry on the window, and a shaft of golden light cut across the thick blue haze in the carriage.

" By gum, we can see Tommy's great country now," said Trevor, flinging open the window.

A rush of soft cool air came in. They were tearing through the Bog of Allen, vast, brown, a tangle of grasses of deep brown, of pools stretching away with here and there a fringe of little trees to blue cloud-capped hills. Sometimes there was a tiny cottage crouching on a rise, breaking the great brown expanse. It seemed as if all Ireland wept with a twinkle in her tear-dimmed eyes, for every twig, every blade of bog-grass, every tuft of withering bog cotton was gemmed with sparkling moisture.

The great bog-land flung its strange spell on them in its loneliness. They rushed past little roads banked high between gleaming trenches of deep brown water, past a wood, and there was still bog, brown and yellow, mauve with fading heather, green here and there with treacherous grassed-over slime ; dotted with twisted thorns, but every bog untenanted by life.

Martin's first remark as he looked out was that it didn't look quite like a galloping country.

" Want a good water jumper," he murmured vaguely, " with web feet, wouldn't you, Tommy ? Stop even your grey, I fancy." Tommy grunted disconsolately.

" Place is all water overhead or underneath," he said. " The legs have landed us in a queer spot, Martin."

Then the spell fell on them. Ireland stretched out her tender child's hands and touched them. She was on her lands whispering welcome from the waving grasses, from the waiting pools. Irresponsible, rebellious, resenting discipline, yet lovable always.

"Yet somehow one'd like to have a house near it," said Martin softly. "Oh, on piles if you like, Bones, but look!" The glow of sunshine flushed the decayed heather to glory; put gleam of copper on the mystery of the pools. The mist caps sailed from the hill-tops, leaving them clear cut against a pallid blue sky. The woods were tinged with scarlet and bronze, flaring under the golden light.

Little fields sprang up through the brown, tilled spots, then green and more green, and the great bog lay behind in its wonder, giving place to pasture lands, to fences which made them long to loose bridles and ride at them, to fields they longed to gallop over. "Oh why didn't Aunt Eliza make it an annual affair," groaned Tommy, "so that I could ride here always. Look at those green fields."

Then as suddenly as she had laughed Ireland wept again. The hill-tops were blotted out by swelling masses of vapour, the blue dulled and was blurred and a leaden grey spread from the south-west. Rain blurred the glass, lashing down in great sheets until they closed the windows and saw no more of the green country they were running through.

They changed at a small wind-swept station, rain dashing off the long tin roof which sheltered it. They got damp and angry as they wrestled for their luggage with a good-humoured guard whose van had not reached cover.

Tommy, his dog beneath his arm, was giving up all hopes of finding his suit-case when with reluctance the guard moved a bag of Indian meal and discovered it.

Mr. O'Brien, of Durra, put that in himself at Cahervalley Junction," he said, "and the bag being delicate he cautioned me not to sthir it. Signs on it is gone on him. It is for his sister."

Tommy remarked irritably that it seemed to be gone on to *him*, for his case was powdered with fine dust and as it had been turned upside down he wondered how much had got in. "Mrs. Malone, his sister, will not be best plazed," said the guard pleasantly. "An' I holding the mail four minutes to get the portmanty. "Thank you, sir," this as Tommy perceived that holding the mail was clearly a case for a tip.

Tommy wondered how men servants seemed to collect their goods without effort. Martin's traps had been wheeled across to the Killone train, and Brown was carefully taking up every seat in a first-class carriage with coats and bags.

"Good luck," said the guard, getting out to wave his flag. "Killone ye're for, they should let ye off shortly if the 2.5 up isn't delayed."

Tommy kicked his mealy suit-case and strode under cover.

The coaches of the train to Killone were high and narrow, the carriages were dirty and slightly ragged, and even Brown was ruffled because, having glanced casually at the match strikers on the windows, he discovered that he had chosen a non-smoker, and he had to remove everything. The label was on the far side of the smoking carriage and smudged.

"Wot the 'ell did you fix match strikers in the wrong carriage ?" queried Brown crisply of his porter. "Giving me all this ere trouble for nothing."

The porter returned that he might have been asked and that the sorra the taste it mattered anyways "for if they were the full of the carriage who'd get in."

Martin asked languidly if he had time to send a wire.

"Ye'd near have time to take it with the delay that's on the 2.5," said the porter, looking sourly down at the single line. " The same ways with her always because she can take her aise to catch the Dublin here. Ye have an hour yet, or near it."

The refreshment-room yielded boiled tea and hard bread, which was paid for but not eaten, and the three men disliked the little station thoroughly. They were hungry and getting tired.

Brown, who disappeared for a time, returned with the air of the well fed. Martin murmured that France had made a lot of difference to these chaps. He recalled the time when Brown's sandwiches had to be made more carefully than his own.

He remarked on it ill-humouredly as they went across to the train, the missing 2.5 having been signalled.

" You don't mind that sort of stuff now, Brown," he said.

" Hotel was quite close, sir," said Brown imperturbably ; " it was too late to tell you when I got back, and I wasn't sure of the distance when I started, quite good cold food there, sir."

Martin's expression was completely thunderous, but as they got into the dusty carriage Brown produced a box.

" Got a few sandwiches and soda water, sir," he said. " Whisky's in the flask, and they spared grapes too."

Under these softening influences they watched the leisurely arrival of the belated train.

" Thirty minutes, Tomsy Keogh," raved the station master. " You'll mislay her altogether some day the way you're at it."

" The sthaff sthuck on us at Contraveen," said the engine-driver placidly, " an' two wagons to put on or put off at every station, when they crossed me with the goods thraffic, making a mongrel of a passenger, where am I ? "

The station master was of heated opinion that he knew where Tomsy would shortly be, and was counselled by the guard of the down train to let them off anyways, or Marty Flood at Borris, would be usin' words to him.

At this one of the porters looked hurriedly at tickets, and a very stout man flung himself at the last moment into the luggage-crowded carriage.

Tommy made room for the intruder with the reluctant manner of all travellers. The train jerking on.

" Have ye a first-class, Mr. O'Donnell," said the porter, keeping pace with them.

" I have not, but when you wouldn't expect to see any train at all, being thirty minutes late, I threw myself in anywhere, Paddy," returned the fat man breathlessly. " Not but I guessed that I couldn't count on Tomsy Keogh. I'll be there as soon as in a third-class, Paddy."

Paddy let the train pass him without further comment. Mr. O'Donnell, who was enormous and very damp, mopped rain and heat from his crimson face and blew hard.

" I had a big bunch of cattle to buy," he said, " an' I had to be late. We galloped the last mile in, for I thought I was done this time. You'd never know when Tomsy might make a mistake an' be up to time."

He stared at Varmint the terrier, at the whips and saddle, his small eyes winking in their bed of fat.

" Be chance are you the men that's after Barry Maguire's hounds ? " he said eagerly.

Tommy observed civilly that they were and O'Donnell hit his mighty thigh.

" Great Begonnes ! " he said happily. " A fine country, and dogs that can sing and go I tell you. Dogs bred back to the Flood I'd say. Aw . . . aw . . . but Barry." Here he paused as if torn by some internal conflict. " Have you horses ? " he puffed, mopping again.

Martin's reply of " Not enough if we stay," turned the scale in Mat O'Donnell's mind. The desire to tell some of the truth about Barry had almost mastered him, also of the lack of foxes, but the thought of horseless men counterbalanced it heavily.

"Great again," he puffed. "Great. . . . I am on the committee, or I was when they had one," he added, "an' pleased to be on again an' help you to get the country right. I can't deny it's been a bit neglected since the war. We must put an odd fox down here an' there, but we'll be grateful to you for takin' it up."

Tommy said that he understood perfectly. He felt sure now that the Master had been away in France and come back to find his county gone to shreds. Hard luck when he was probably too ill to hunt it himself. Or too poor, having neglected his farm also.

"I have two or three nice young horses myself," confided Mat O'Donnell. "Here is Shalleen." He rushed to the window. "Andy, Andy Carty. Don't be delaying here for an hour or I'll report you as sure as me name's Mat."

"Who'll pick up the wagons if I don't ?" retorted a voice outside as the train clanked and backed.

"He has three wagons to pick up for me at Dereen," said O'Donnell, pulling his huge bulk back, "and if he delays too long here he might be leaving them for the morning train. D'ye see."

Martin saw . . . perfectly. He wondered privately who might talk about reporting at Dereen.

"His house is on my land, so he can't be giving me much chat," said the big man, mopping again after his exertions. "As I was saying I have a sweet young mare. Is it breedy like them," he added, "or heavy weights ?"

Mat intended the reply to guide his description of his pedigrees.

He listened to Tommy's outburst concerning nothing like blood, followed by Trevor's reservation on his part he liked a good cross of hunter strain, and then looked at Martin, who said nothing, as he smoked in thoughtful silence.

" And I won't ride four-year-olds," said Trevor.

Mat decided that this was easily managed.

" Well then two of mine are five," he said carelessly. " One is by Green Hackle, out of an old Barcaldaile mare, the other is a neat hunter out of a great mare I had myself. I'm not always the last yet, on my grey cob," he added modestly.

Mr. O'Donnell had bought both animals at Cahermee, but having got his cue he had taken it.

" They are nice horses and well schooled," he said. " There is a man coming to see them only next week." The inevitable desire to take the horseflesh which the other man might desire swayed both Tommy and Trevor.

Martin, waking up a little, suddenly began to ask questions. The number of days the country would stand ? If there were any subscriptions ? What the young entry were like ? and so forth, with Tommy, who had some vague ideas that hounds were God-sent creatures coming to the meet as if by magic and that foxes were as manna provided for them by a sporting Heaven.

Mr. O'Donnell caressed his many folded stubbly chin and stared fixedly at the dusty cushions opposite him. He rolled the perfect sweetness of giving away Barry Maguire under his tongue, discarding it for the bitter pill of reticence as his glance travelled on to Varmint the terrier and the saddles. He knew where horses could be bought, and he shrewdly thought that he knew now where they could be sold. So he gulped loudly as if swallowing something, and brought himself to answer that there should be foxes for there was a lame one that had swept two of his turkeys. The country was big enough for two days a week and a try in the black hills. " There are foxes there surely," said Mr. O'Donnell, speaking with less decision because he knew this to be true. And the young entry. "Barry has a store of them I'd say, for I met him in at Crowes trying to get some distemper stuff only last week. He wasn't best pleased to do without it either, for he said it was one of Ruby's pups an' she's the best they have."

"Why on earth with a pack of hounds about don't they keep things," said Tommy.

"Well, it was on credit he was looking for it," said Mr. O'Donnell simply. "That settled it. Isn't it a terrible evening," he added as a crackle of rain drove against the dirty glass. "I tell you I'll be glad to get in. I'm short four miles of your drive and I have a nice pork steak in the parcel there for supper. It is five miles from Killone to Castletown Maguire," he explained, "and a hilly road."

Varmint had wriggled away from Tommy and become very quiet. The train clanked and jostled on, stopping at a little station where a tide of wet people ebbed and flowed in the wet dimmed light, then when their clamour for parcels had been appeased the guard would suggest "letting her off," and with waving of lamps they would jerk on again into the dusky evening.

"We are nearing Killone," said O'Donnell, waking from a snorting slumber. "This is the hill. There's times they do not get up," he added, "but if they had the sense not to pick up those extra wagons at Shalleen we should do it to-night."

The perceptible slowing indicated that it was a borderline affair, but they drew on slowly and the big man commenced to rout for his parcels.

It was at this moment that Tommy, looking for Varmint, saw her delicate black nose just withdrawing from a brown paper, and her pink tongue licking off the last morsels of something raw. With horror he realized that the terrier had finished Mr. O'Donnell's pork steaks, having nosed the bundle off the seat and torn it open.

Tommy, with instinctive desire to conceal the tragedy, stooped for the paper, which he crumpled up without sound. He felt that Varmint would never be a favourite if she began like this.

" The bit of steak is in that corner," said O'Donnell. " There isn't a bite in the house, so Maria warned me to bring some pounds of it. Just beyond you, Captain."

Martin looked languidly and said there was no parcel in the corner.

" I laid it there with me two hands. Did the dog tear it open ? " Varmint was now on Tommy's lap, any little clinging fragments of fat brushed from her lips. " Did she steal it ? "

" Bless me she couldn't have eaten paper and string," said Trevor, poking under the seat.

Tommy, lifting up his bag, said in his hurry Mr. O'Donnell must have let the parcel fall when he was getting in, to which O'Donnell replied heatedly that he'd have been as likely to drop his soul, and the search proceeded.

As they hauled their traps on to the dripping platform, Mr. O'Donnell was searching feverishly, and daring the guard to proceed until his supper was found.

To this the guard returned with some pleasantry concerning cutting steaks off one of the bullocks they had no right to be dragging with them on the passenger. Tommy sighed softly and with relief.

Tomsy, the only porter, swooping to their help as he caught sight of neat suit-cases, they got their luggage out of the van amid heated clamourings from the unattended, who stormed into the compartment searching wildly. Their excited queries all being answered with perfect good humour by the unmoved Tomsy.

" I did not see ye're bag of meal, Mrs. Clanchy. No, I did not conceal it under the ile can. Is this your portmanty, sir ? . . . this to Tommy. " Gracious God, Mrs. Donelly, there is no parcel from Lynch's, none I tell you; don't be upsottin' everything. Unless it got casht outside an' Tomsy Kelly flingin' around for his box of hatchin' eggs. Sure I cannot help it, Patsy, if ye have no bacon. Maybe it is left at Lisnagry, or maybe it is below here yet. Is that the gun-case, sir? We have all. Those should be the prize cocks ye are afther, Mrs. Mulqueen. There is somethin' cluckin' in the hamper in the corner. Is it open? No, I did not open it searching for Mrs. Clanchy's male. Sorra the search I med at all. Give me a hand out with this big bag, Andy Carty."

When Andy Carty the guard made protest that time was up, Tomsy merely returned that it was up this half hour, and with the swarm in the van it would be more yet.

"That's the ways with ye, agitaytin' now," he said to the guard with the same perfect good humour, "an' it twenty minutes after time before the signal clicked up from Carrigfergus.

"Andy Carty returning pleasantly that it would be forty minutes before it clicked up from Killone, and was rewarded by the tip which he plainly looked for.

As he cleared his van of the crowd, Mrs. Mulqueen, who had wrapped her shawl round the hole in the fowl's basket, tripped heavily, so that with a squawl of fear a large white Leghorn cock escaped, to flap down the platform with Varmint at his heels. Stout Mrs. Mulqueen, declaring that she'd have the law of the company, rolling in pursuit.

"The dog will have him," observed the porter as he piled the bags on a barrow. "No, he is crabbit. He has his wings up."

This as the white cock rose and flapped on to the roof of one of the carriages, where he crowed vociferously, amid the roars of joy from the onlookers.

When Andy Carty endeavoured to start his belated train he was seized by the frantic owner of the cock who

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declared that it would be bether for the line that the train should never reach Traveen, than to receive the bill for her prize cock.

" He will light down when he gets the shake," comforted Tomsy. " Chook! Chook! Chook! Chook! Anyways the draft will knock him when they get the fall of ground," he added.

As Mrs. Mulqueen raved that where would she be at the fall of ground, Andy Carty waved his flag, and the train started with the white cock on the coach, Mrs. Mulqueen restrained by two able bodied friends from hanging on to it, and the guard flinging some last pleasantry concerning his supper from his van.

Tommy tucked Varmint under his arm as the cock, believing the end of his world was with him, squawked and flapped back to the platform.

Martin, helpless with laughter, had subsided on the missing bag of meal.

" I begin to think it is a great country," he said, getting up.

Mrs. Mulqueen had secured the cock and was viciously tying his two legs together before she thrust him into his basket.

" The marauding vilyin," she gasped, her ill-humour quite gone.

" A car from Castletown Maguire, is it ? " said Tomsy. " This is a terrible spot, yer honor, whin the thrain comes in. There is one outside with Larry the Hare, an another for the luggage."

They went out through a narrow door into the swirl and drive of the grey rain, Tommy looking round for a motor.

The space outside the station was crowded with carts, one disreputable dog-cart was groaning and creeking as Mat O'Donnell flung himself into it, and there was a rickety outside car drawn by a jady looking wall-eyed mare.

" This is the car," said Tom, " and Larry the Hare."

Larry the Hare touched a ragged cap genially. He shook his head at the word motor.

" Mister Barry never ownded one that would go," he said briefly. " He has an ould shell. He hired me for yer honors, an' this mare if she passes Henessy's public, will wheel you there as quick as any masheen. There is the jinnit for the luggage."

They got on to the high seats, Larry putting Tommy and Varmint and Martin at one side, with a comment that that fall was delicate.

The luggage was roped and piled on to the jennets cart, the shuffling little man who packed it on hoping that Bessheen would take the hills with the weight.

" Garn out of that ye schamer," said Larry to the wall-eyed mare. " Garn, I tell ye. Darlint her name is," said Larry over his shoulder, " an' Darlint she is. Whin she likes."

Darlint fled into the dusk at a raking gallop, they shaved small carts crawling away; foot passengers scattered without comment, and they dashed down the main street of Killone at the same pace.

" To keep her going so fast that the weight of the car shoves her past is the best chance," confided Larry the Hare. " She was out onst before to-day, buryin' Tim Dayly, an' she is too crabbit not to guess there is a long road in front of her now. Cripes, she has me done."

Sir Martin fell off ungracefully and with ill-humour as the mare suddenly flung out her fore legs and stopped as if she was shot.

" There's for ye," said Larry unmoved. " Danny Keefe, Paddy, are ye inside ? Give her a twisht."

A large youth lounging out remarked that the mare was a holy terror. With deftness evidently born of practice, he seized the bridle, wheeling the wall-eyed mare round and round as rapidly as he could and with one awful whack starting her off on her way at a gallop.

"That is the only ways," said Larry, "to confuse her so that she won't know which line she is facin'. She will not sthop again. An' that was a good turrn with her. Times she does be there an hour."

When Sir Martin asked slowly what happened if the mare was taking anyone *to* a train, Larry replied that no one would be catchin' trains comin' that way away from the station house, an she did not sthop goin' in.

Sir Martin understanding that Larry knew but one possible station to drive to, murmured, "Oh," gently.

Darlint's great raking trot shook the car so that they pitched and rocked; the wet hedges slid by them; in the gloom they could see stretches of wood and the steep inclines they went up or down.

Larry, driving with a slack rein, talked incessantly. This was a spot where a fox had been killed; here where a stream gurgled. Old Mat O'Donnell, father of the present man, had killed a horse.

"Begonnes, ye'll have sport," said Larry. "That was tight," he added in the same breath as they touched a donkey cart. "Not a light on one of them wastrels," he said contemptuously. "I had one meself always till the little lamp broke," he added, slipping the lash on to Darlint on the spot which he knew to be tender.

"The step on this tender fall is nearly off," remarked Tommy patiently. "And I think the side is too," he added, poising himself cautiously.

Tommy did not mind the long, dark drive. He was dreaming as he went. When the curtain of night was lifted he expected to see the scene set in great green fields, fenced with green banks. Pasture which carried scent stretching in rich flatness. His fingers gripped imaginary reins. He felt the good horse between his knees, saw the shoulders moving rhythmically in front of him, ear cocked as his hunter swung at a fence—and hounds, his hounds, hunting in front. One year, two years of this delirium, and after that the deluge of the Colonies.

Tommy was too young to realize that even as our hopes are fulfilled, they breed fresh desires, more lusty than their forbears. That the glory of a season passes almost as a dream itself, leaving man who lives in futurity, thinking, as March dust becomes the pall of his hunting, of October's crisp frost. He was wrapt in the present, while the wall-eyed mare bucked through the dust. He felt that hunting hounds must be bred in him. It was all to be days of fiery scent, of straight running foxes.

"By Gad, aren't you longing to see it," he said, his voice thrilling with sheer pleasure. "I know it's going to be a success."

Martin replied dreamily that what he'd seen had been devilish humpy.

"Seems to be hills poking everywhere," he said, "and we haven't been on the flat for five minutes."

"Faix it takes an ondependent mount to carry ye here," put in Larry the Hare. "The common ones has their tails workin' after a short dhrass, I tell ye. This is Castletown," he added. "Inside the great wall. Me grandfather towlt me there wasn't twenty gaps in that same in his day," he added, pointing to the mounds of fallen stone which could just be seen.

They swung in through wide iron gates, one wheel hitting an impediment viciously so that Tommy's side of the car cracked and swayed.

"That is a very orkard centre stone," said Larry, looking back. "It was set out of the way onst when Mr. Barry had a motor cyar on loan, an begonnes every time I forgets the side they laid it on. Are ye above yet, sir?" he asked Tommy.

The mare broke into a gallop and they were whirled up a rutty avenue jolting and lurching, until the dark mass of a house rose darkly, a chink of yellow light oozing from the doorway.

"Safe and sound," said Larry, pulling up. "God be praised for that same."

The chink widened as the door was swung open and Barry, in his best suit, ran down the steps to greet the arrivals.

They were sporting chaps to come so far. They'd know they'd done right. Were they very tired? It was the devil of a soft night. Barry's voice was full of welcome. He spoke as if he had known them all for years.

Tommy noticed a slender maid, who stood on the steps without making any attempt to come down for their suit-cases. She held a hand lamp peering at them, as Barry bustled round.

"The jinnet's car will be near as soon as you, Larry. Tomsy'll face Knockafouna with it," said Barry.

"He said he would," said Larry. "An' I towlt him not to be blamin' me if the ropes didn't howld the luggage."

Martin sighed faintly.

They went into the big square hall, the blend of many smells of cleaning drifting out to meet them. Tommy looked round, well content with the shabbiness in the shadows.

Larry, carrying in bags, reminded them that he would now take his fare.

"One pound for the cyar an' ten shillin' for the luggage, an' what is plazin' to ye for meself," he said pleasantly.

Martin handed him two pounds.

"As a thanksgiving," said Sir Martin languidly. "Not as a fare."

"An' I'll be sthayin' the night," said Larry. "For the mare has a hard day with her, with corpses an' all. I'll find what I'm wanting. The gintry might be lookin' for a dhrive out to-morry, and then for Friday. Mr. Barry, I'll be fetchin . . ."

Here Barry's "Bedam to you, Larry the Hare," was low and full of warning.

Varmint had walked in and was being petted by the slender maidservant.

"Is it a fool ye take me for?" said Larry, retiring with dignity.

Tommy was greeted by a hard-faced lady who bade him welcome pleasantly, and caught sight of two scurry-figures in a large room to his right. The blended smell of soap was quite unpleasant.

"It's after dinner time. I'll take up your bags if you've got them, or—er—" Barry stared at Brown who was gathering the things up. "Tirrie, the light."

"My man," said Martin. "We must wash a little dust off, but won't keep you waiting."

Tirrie took up the lamp and waved it at the staircase. Then she walked up with it unwillingly. Every window in the three bedrooms was tightly shut, and large fires of turf and wood made the rooms smell of disinfected mushrooms. The carpets were still unpleasantly damp, while in Tommy's room the boards had not had time to dry, and the clinging odour of drying was especially pungent. His bed was a four-poster draped with heavy moth perforated damask curtains.

"Think they've had smallpox," said Martin, strolling in.

"They've shut it in if they have," replied Tommy, who had clanked back the heavy shutters and was wrestling with his window.

"Brown's got mine up," said Martin.

Tommy went out into the long passage, catching sight of Tirrie as she brought up a forgotten bag.

"Here, I say, Mary, open my window," he said irritably.

"My name's Tirrie. It doesn't open," said Tirrie, laying down the bag and calling Varmint softly.

"Then get me a chisel," said Tommy, "or——"

A second maid, capless, thrust her head past a ragged baize-covered door to announce that the soup was ready.

" Mary Kateen, he wants his window open," said Tirrie. " I knew he would. Get him a chisel."

Mary Kateen shut the door and Tommy watched the parlourmaid stroll down the front stairs to stop at the bottom as she met Barry and say snappishly, " One of them's stifled with soap and passion."

Tommy noted that the parlourmaid was on too familiar terms with her employer, also that Varmint followed her.

The second maid came hurrying back carrying a broken chisel.

" It is the ways it is sthuck with the paint," she said, good-naturedly, as she watched Tommy's efforts. " I wouldn't say it was ever opened since they painted the windows. That was after the Masther died here," she added. Tommy strove on in silence.

" I'll get Larry the Hare to make at it afterwards," said Mary Kateen. " Lave it to me, sir. Dinner's up."

Tirrie had gone downstairs to smite the gong, taking up the stick to hit it three hard strokes when Brown, coming up behind her, offered to help and filled the house with rolling sound.

" So that's how it's done," said Tirrie, settling her cap.

The white coronet perched on her dark soft hair. framing her little pale face. Tirrie had purchased the fancy caps of her ambitions.

She went composedly to the dining-room, helping soup with a lavish hand. Strong rabbity flavoured soup with little blobs of fat floating on it, which congealed as Tirrie, without waiting for anyone to come in, put the soup down on the table.

Tommy had unravelled the tangle of their identities to their hostess. He was now known as Major, and Bones as Captain. Dahlia and Juliet, in dresses done up with several things, had been introduced, and Sir Martin took in Florence Maguire, who had rooted out an old magentavelvet made when the women wore waists, and was stifling in its grip.

The dining-room had been scrubbed and tidied. The silver shone in places ; the sideboard reeked of linseed oil and porter.

Tirrie had decorated the table with a huge cut-glass bowl filled with outdoor chrysanthemums.

Something roused the hounds outside, making them bark.

" Kennel's close," said Martin, waking up.

Barry broke into tales of his hounds. " Ranter and Ringman and Bellman too." He told stories in his sugary voice of many hunts, until Tommy's eyes glistened and he longed for the day when he might try his luck.

Two elaborate entrées concocted by Dahlia followed the cold soup, and it was on their arrival that Tirrie made her first error.

" Chops or bacon," said Tirrie, handing absently as she yearned to contradict Barry, her brother. " Chops or bacon, sir. All lies," she muttered under her breath, handing to Sir Martin.

Martin interrogated a kromeskie with a spoon and something cold in jelly with his eyes.

" All lies," he said as softly as Tirrie had. " Chop I'd like," and he took a kromeskie.

Dahlia's agonized Tirrie! was too plainly audible. " Kromeskies or aspics, Tirrie," she breathed in what she hoped was a whisper.

" Ch-omeskies or B-aspic," breathed Tirrie, growing confused.

Martin hammered the kromeskie, finding the bacon raw inside the batter. The mince lining tasted of wild rabbit and pepper.

Tirrie took refuge in pink-cheeked silence. Barry unobserving, chattered on.

" You have stables here for twenty horses, a yard of your own, and I know of a few hunters," he told Tommy

" A fat man we met on the train said he knew of two," said Tommy. " Had two himself."

" Mat O'Donnell maybe. I never saw him with anything but his grey cob," said Barry. " Whisky, Tirrie. Whisky, I say, girl, and the soda. That's a new maid," he explained easily as Tirrie laid down the dishes on the sideboard and took up the heavy old decanter."

The rest of the dinner was Mary Kate's cooking and excellent. Tirrie moved about deftly if a little abstractedly as she listened to every one talking.

Martin woke from silence to question as he had questioned Mat O'Donnell. The number of days, etc. " And meal," said Martin, " come to much ? "

" Meal—its potatoes," burst out Tirrie at the side-table.

Martin turned his sleek black head softly.

" No one wants potatoes," snapped Barry, his face red. " One must feed hounds, Fitz Hughes, and with good stuff."

" I'll have a potato please," said Martin to Tirrie.

" And not always those," muttered Tirrie, advancing with the dish.

Martin took a large potato very slowly and thoughtfully. After this Tirrie was silent, waiting well. Barry parried questions cleverly and dinner drew to an end.

The Maguires had always turned round to the wood fire. To-night Florence Maguire made an unwilling move to the long drawing-room, still damp from hearty washings, with some logs sulking in a high old-fashioned grate.

Tommy shivered as he looked round the gaunt room.

" If you take the hounds and care to stay here, there's a neat smoking-room to rig up for you," observed Barry, kicking a log closer to its smouldering companion. Martin cheered up a little. Through a maze of sleepiness he listened to Dahlia chattering as to local gaieties.

A dance would be an easy thing to get up with a few men anxious for it. The girls were plenty. And they might have a concert for the Fowl Fund. Barry would sing, and they could if they could practise.

Martin nodded. Through the mist of sleep which he could not combat he saw the maid come in with a tray of tea and coffee and deliberately make a face at Barry.

" Tea or coffee," said Tirrie at his elbow. " I'd take tea," she added in a confidential undertone. " Mary Kate's coffee is doubtful."

Martin took tea, woke up and confessed his weariness, and went to bed. His window was open. Tommy came in to poke his head into the soft dimness outside and declare that he could almost make out the hunting country.

The hungry hounds gave occasional yowls or yaps, and Tommy hoped that they did not disturb the foxes.

Morning came with a grey dawn, a shimmer of gold and a burst of sunlight.

Tommy rushed to his window and looked out.

The woods of Castletown Maguire stretched and met the woods of Castle Crehan and Anniscara, mingling and tangling, some trees still scarlet and gold, the earth red with rusty masses where the beech leaves had fallen. A long lake rippled about a quarter of a mile away, its shores scarlet, flanked with dogwood, or yellowed with golden willow. At its far side on a steep hill, pines massed darkly green, clustered thick on the water's edge, thinning as the slope rose until towards the top they were sparsely sprinkled. On the north side a wood had been cut down, its stumps still whitely raw. Broken brick walls guarded a huge square garden, which even in the distance looked neglected. The apple trees a tangle of crossing branches, the squares green with grass and weeds. There were no workmen about, no one sweeping up the huddle of leaves on the paths, the grass was not cut.

Tommy noted all this when his eager eyes had searched vainly for a glimpse of undulating pasture for the green hunting heaven of his dreams.

" Beyond the trees, I s'pose," he said, drawing back his head and noting that he was cold."

Martin, in resplendent dressing-gown, strolled in.

" Waiting for the wash-house boiler to heat up the bath water," he said languidly, " and Brown said that some one called Mary Kateen wasn't too hopeful of it as the grate was bust."

Tommy said " No bath room ? " gloomily.

" Country outside the trees looks a little hilly," murmured Martin softly.

As the mists rolled back jutting noses poked out of them, some silver wreathed, some still half shrouded ; green hills, grey hills, purple hills, shadow and sun-flecked, but all distinctly miniature mountains.

Tommy said, " Range of 'em, I s'pose," as he lathered his chin. His heart was set to a tune which would not change. Tommy Blackburn, M.F.H. In imagination he foresaw his wondrous casts when hounds were at fault, his patience, his quickness.

" How long d'ye let 'em alone for, Martin ? " he asked, waking from a dream of a perfect gallop, and the beautiful sight of his pack casting themselves at their first check.

Martin said he supposed until the water was really hot, and was cursed for an idiot.

" Hounds, man ! " burst out Tommy. " Hounds, when the brutes check."

Tommy had ridden hard in his short day, but to him hounds when their heads went up were annoyances, losing him his gallop. He had fretted and fidgeted, his eyes more on the best place to take when the line was hit off, than on the pied beauties with a puzzle to entangle, or on the black capped king of his particular chase, thinking it all out.

" In your case at first altogether," said Martin. " Eh, Brown ? "

" Mary Kateen, Sir, regrets that the sorra the biler'll bile, Sir Martin, so she has sent up three kettles full until Larry the Hare puts the bricks in the range."

Brown laid out flat bath tubs, and Tommy, still wrapped in blissful anticipation, dressed quickly.

Tirrie had just finished laying the table. A few yellow outdoor chrysanthemums brightened it. There were hot buns and boiled eggs and cold game, but the local grocer had refused bacon and sausages.

Tirrie had laid the table with taste, and despite the mingled odours of smoke and soap, the three men enjoyed their breakfast.

Florence Maguire, her hard face fixed into somewhat palpably forced amiability, dispensed tea from a huge silver teapot. Dahlia and Juliet were becurled of hair, beblousied with due regard to display of necks. Their smiles were not forced, because they rejoiced in butter which was not kept for Barry, and a supply of cold game and eggs.

The curiously fierce mother love of Florence Maguire was hidden but never checked, showing itself as she whispered to Barry that there was a cold duck she'd shoved aside for him, in picking out two brown eggs and laying them by his plate, and in her care that his tea was hot.

Tommy ate his breakfast hurriedly. He wanted to get out to see hounds and horses and the country he was going to ride over.

The sun broke glowing through the mists, glinting on gossamer webs and flaunting leaves.

" You'd like to see the hounds," said Barry, pushing back his chair. " Eh, Blackburn. You've heard 'em, I expect. We're used to it."

Tommy almost dived to the door. He bumped against

Tirrie who was dusting the hall and who merely remarked, " Easy there. Hullo, Varmint," in a careless voice.

They went down the shallow grey steps on to the unraked green gravel. Tirrie's little garden the only spot of colour in the unkempt grass.

" In here," said Barry, unlocking a wicket gate. " Have to keep it locked," he said, " for the bailiffs."

The big yard echoed in its emptiness. Barry slouched across it, his lumpy ill-clothed figure too clearly outlined in the sunlight, his mother at the window watching him with adoring eyes.

" Them three," said Mary Kate, coming to the kitchen door, " have a military cut on their riding throusers, Miss Tirrie. Them London tailors has the way to puff the sides an pinch the knees. Look at Barty's now, an Mister Barry's."

Tirrie put down her laden tray and looked out too.

Tommy was plainly full of eagerness, looking about him, peering at the stable doors. Martin lounged comprehensively and Trevor had the air of one who followed.

" A lick of tar and a few nails would make those stables fit for any horses," said Barry. " Fine airy boxes, twenty of 'em. All full once before we—broke."

Tommy liked him for the speech. In his overflowing humour he sensed Barry leaving his farm to go the to war and losing everything by his absence.

" One gets paid back somehow for that kind of thing," he said sympathetically.

" There aren't many who get paid here," said Barry, grinning softly. " You could have all this yard. I've no horses now, or nothing that matters."

Six knock-kneed inbred puppies sprawled from sunny corners to meet them. They were without the roundness or light-heartedness of well-fed puppyhood, their coats staring, their ribs like barrel hoops.

Larry the Hare slipped through the hidden door, Barty behind him. Barty was shamefacedly attired in an old sheet, hurriedly fashioned into a white coat, the sleeves were mere bags tied in at the wrists and he blushed as he followed Larry.

The kennel wires were mended by anything anyone could pick up. Darned together with pitchfork handles, ends of wire palings and snaps of lettuce wire.

Larry opened a rotting door, took up a whip and went over the dirty flags.

Before he could reach the inner door it crashed open and a flood of hungry hounds poured out, growling at Larry, rushing on to look for badly needed food.

They withdrew yelping from hearty thumps.

" For the love of God can't ye feed them, Barty," said Larry anxiously. " Sthep inside man or they'll swally me."

Barty remarked dubiously that they'd maybe swally him, Barty, quicker with a whole day's disappointment in their sthomicks, but that he had a taste on the biler for the craythurs.

Fifteen couple of half-starved brutes. Knock-kneed, bleary eyed, throaty here and there ; a six-season hound better looking because better bred.

Sir Martin took off his cap rather solemnly, his eyes very wide open, but to Tommy they were hounds. Glorious pied creatures which could put their noses down and *hunt*. He stared at them happily, and Barry drew a long deep breath.

" Good noses," murmured Martin, still staring.

" What they get on the thrail of God save," said Barty emphatically. " But last March. The masther's calf, the craythur."

Here Barty wilted before a fiery glance.

" A sick calf we killed for them," said Barry, " boiled down." You might feed 'em, Barty, soon."

" If hounds were cannibils it might be aisy," murmured Barty darkly. " Down Thrumpeter. Down Bandsman. Down. Mary Kate wants this coat agin for the pilly covers. Sorra the word I can throw to-day," muttered Barty, again silenced by a look and fierce whisper.

" And they can really hunt ? " Martin stared in at the pack.

" They can faith," said Barry. " We'll try the place in the morning. I'll get horses for you. Oh, they can hunt. If we find a fox."

CHAPTER V

THEY went through the hidden door to look at Barry's horses. He had two of his own and had borrowed two others from a man whom he owed money to, promising to sell them.

The first box they went into contained a lumpy, badly put together liver chestnut, with just enough good points to put him on the border-line as a hunter.

"A great horse," said Barry, "gallops and stays, and such manners. Just carry you, Blackburn. Not up to Fitz Hughes's weight."

Martin murmured sleepily that he rode five pounds lighter than Tommy. He strolled out of the box to look absently at the hilly country.

"Your English horses may be fizzers, but an M.F.H. ought to start on something that knows the country," said Barry.

The next was a long, low black, fired for spavins and with a pony head, which Martin came in to look at and again went out.

"He is like the jacks in the box with the disgust the horses gives him," said Barty, quite audibly to his father.

There was a black cob, one of the strange horses, and a brown, Barry praised them all, deftly. The black was a leetle anxious, wanted a horseman on his back. Only Barry knew the sharp stitel he had used to make the horse face his fences. The brown was not such an experienced hunter.

"We bate him twice across the bounds fence an' he only fell the onst, Mr. Barry," said Barty, anxious to praise. "God save me!" he added to himself, "an' I thryn to plaze."

But there there they were, for sale if required. Well bred, up to weight and fast.

" Honest horses," said Barry. " Just off grass, no doing up for sale."

They looked at the woods during the day. Saw the hounds out and talked or rather listened to Barry. Then, after a sleepy game of Bridge in which Tommy acted as instructor to the two Miss Maguires, he slept fitfully, too excited to rest. The morning would see the hounds he hoped to hunt out, and Barry had suggested his hunting them himself.

Brown had laid out hunting clothes. They hung over a chair in the light of the wood fire with boots gleaming sombrely, and once through a half-waking dream Tommy thought that he saw a thin little man stooping over them and heard a soft chuckle. He woke staring and there was only the leaping flame of a log as it fell to the hot ashes below it and his clothes laid ready, but the impression had been vivid.

A golden day was creeping up behind the trees when Brown announced shaving water.

" A little chilly, Sir," said Brown. " Owing to Mary Kate opining one can shave later, after breakfast in fact."

The crisp cold air of autumn came in through the window, white mists billowed in the hollows. The grass was dew drenched with gossamer webs floating thickly pearled and nebulous.

Tommy whistled the " Hunting Day " tunefully as he dressed.

They had some tea, but the start was delayed so much that the tea was supplemented by a species of breakfast before Barry rolled in to say the horses were ready, and added gloomily that the Trump of Doom wouldn't get that Larry the Hare up sometimes.

" We ought to find in the long wood," he said. " There's a fox there for sure, but we'll try the lake spinney first."

Tommy found the lumpy chestnut ready for him. Trevor rode the black. A long brown mare had been procured for Martin ; and Barry and Barty rode a brace of mealy-coloured, nondescript-looking cobs docked and hogged which had been reluctantly lent by Larry's father.

" It was fetchin' them same put the slheep on Larry this morning," said Barty. " He was not back till twelve, for he had to wait till the mare was in from carryin' a man to Carrigalyn. She remembers it too I tell ye." This as the mare walked out with stiffness which spoke of the memory.

Even Barry's hounds were good to see as they came leaping out, throwing their tongues as he met them. Tommy's heart missed a beat and his face was white from sheer ecstasy.

" If it wasn't for the legs I might have them for ever," he said.

" First time you might bless your aunt then," said Martin. " How many yards of horse have I got behind me, Bones. It seems a lot."

" That is the besht of the lot, length an' all," said Barty. " She can thravel an' lep." Some one spoke from a stable and Barty whispered an answer.

Brown had succumbed to the excitement and come out to run.

They moved off, throwing the yard gates wide, down the neglected drive and on to a belt of trees by the whispering lapping lake.

" Eleu in. Eleu in." Barry waved his hands and the hounds straggled in among the undergrowth, young Folly opening vociferously as she saw a rabbit.

Barry omitted to rate. He listened carefully, watching Tommy, who was standing up in his stirrup with his whole face aglow.

Then Martin said " Bunny," slowly.

Hounds worked listlessly, but it was pretty to see them in the damp tangle of undergrowth.

"Blow 'em out," said Barry, giving the horn to Tommy.

Tommy had been practising. He blew a "Gone away" with fervent skill and changed it to the sadder note of the "Come away" with a blush.

Hounds straggled out and they moved on down a wet ride.

"Foxy spot," said Martin. "Ought to hold."

"There'll be one in the long wood for sure," said Barry. "I thought we might find here."

The long wood was principally a collection of tree stumps, with a patch of young larch at the far end.

Hounds straggled in the same listless way, almost as if drawing coverts bored them; but after a minute Tempest's deep note rang out. Trumpeter confirmed it. Then old Ruby came out looking dubious, but the younger hounds joined in a crash of music, Folly tearing ahead.

A small figure on a bright chestnut scuttered down the ride. Martin looked, thinking that he recognized the brown breeches, but the face was thickly veiled.

"Go-ne. Away, away. Forrard. Away, away."

Larry the Hare's voice rang with savage emphasis from the larch wood. "Tally away, away."

Barry galloped up the ride cheering vociferously, with Tommy thinking heaven was with him, blowing puffing notes on the horn beside him.

"Out this end, Mister Barry. A great big felly with a white tail on him, flyin' off ondependent."

Martin turned sleepy eyes on Larry.

"A white end to it," corrected Larry. "An' he travellin' out by the four acres."

Hounds were capped and cheered. They dribbled on to the line one by one. Trumpeter going away nose down, up a long green field.

There was only one line of open country out of Castletown. Maguire and hounds ran it now. Slowly, needing cheering and Tommy helping by shouting varieties of encouraging noising. Hoics and Forrards. Pace improved a little, they opened a gate leading into a long ride up which hounds ran and came to a broken wall overgrown with brambles with a stile beside it.

Tommy looked at the fence, but Barry put his cob at it floundering into the dry ditch and climbing up the heaped-up stones which rolled and clattered under his horse's feet. The long brown mare elected to leap the brambles, landing like a cat on the falling masonry.

"That one was always lightsome," remarked Barty. Tommy, as the lumpy chestnut felt each stone gingerly, urged him with heel and bridle, for hounds were carrying ahead.

Next moment a frantic shriek of "The stones are frightening her," made them look back to see the young chestnut's nose laid on the heaped wall as she refused stubbornly. They were in Lord Kilanour's land, and a herd of cows wheeled frightened as they galloped on. A sharp turn to the right took them over a high dry bank into another field running at the back of a huge range of farm buildings.

Barry calling sharply to a stout man in dark green to ask if he had seen the fox.

"I did not," said Macshame, the keeper, sourly. "I am but just the noo out, Mr. Maguire, an' the scent is a trifle cold mayhap." Barry spurred his cob on.

There was no lack of music as they ran through. The fox had chosen an easy line, principally through gates, and scent improving they ran quite fast by a high wall and towards the road.

A high stone-faced bank fenced it. Barry skirted towards a gate. Martin sent the long mare at it at a canter and felt a glow of satisfaction as she steadied, leaping up with catlike activity and landing on the road with equally feline lightness. The black lumped over it awkwardly, and Tommy's chestnut elected to hit it with her chest and send Tommy over first, falling back herself.

" That is the same as ye did in the Sluggera meadows, ye thief," said Barty, catching her. " Have her up, Sir, for she's afeard now."

Hounds ran fast now skirting the narrow road. Some high overgrown fences taken perfectly made Martin decide that the long mare was not to be judged by her looks. They swung past the front gate of Castle Crehan, crossed two low-lying fields, and were confronted by the ruined walls of Castletown.

"He is in again," gasped Barry, who had pelted along the road. " In with you, Sir Martin, and to your right then."

Martin languidly wondered how Barry knew so well, and they supposed it was the only way, this disposed of by the fact that Tommy and Trevor getting in lower down, went to the left. Martin had almost forgotten the girl on the chestnut, but she came tearing up the road, and, following close on his heels, got the youngster over the mound of stones.

They ran down a long ride, crossed the avenue, and next minute hounds were clustered round the mouth of a wide burrow, giving tongue freely as Barry jumped off.

" Didn't I warn you to stop this, Larry," stormed Barry angrily.

Larry the Hare coming out from a clump of bushes said—he was breathing fast—that the vilyin' had scraped away the sthones.

Brown dashing bemired and torn from the woods now joined them.

" 'Aving been 'ere for some minutes I should have seen that yere fox," he said in tones of disappointment."

The hounds tore savagely at the hole. Barry's cries echoed through the wood and Tommy blew the horn lustily. Pouring down Tommy thought the hole seemed full of stones, but he said nothing, not understanding. Heaven seemed a poor thing compared with the thought of hunting these hounds himself over green fields and across banks.

" Good sort of fox the way he took us out of the woods," said Martin, lighting a cigarette.

At this point Larry the Hare whispered urgently to Barry.

" Ruby is tearin' away the rocks in sphite of me, Mister Barry, an' if they gets the liver out we are disgraced. I slhipped the herrin' down as far as me hand'd retch." The hounds tore with the activity of terriers, and Barry looked anxious as he beat them away.

" There's another entrance to this by the lake," he said, " so we might bolt him. If you'd go down the drive, Fitz Hughes, to the lodge and ask for Danny O'Keefe's terrier, and if you two would go down that path and turn to the *left*. Left mind, you'll see a big white rock, and watch there. Don't stop till you meet the rock, the hole is there."

" There's the vally here yet," whispered Larry.

Barry stroked his chin and swore. " And you—Hi, Brown. Would you follow Sir Martin, tell him the white terrier not the red ; hurry like a good fellow."

Tommy and Trevor burst their way through lacing brambles, down and down a narrow path to the edge of the lake. Tommy chattering wildly as he rode. Brown's legs twinkled as he dashed in pursuit of his master and lost his way *en route*.

Behind them Larry the Hare tore rocks from the hole and " hoped to God the bastes'd have it all before the strangers came back. It was a frightsome idea anyways chancin' this dhrag."

Tommy raved of his hounds, of the foxes they would hunt, swinging obediently to the left on a narrow path which wound by the edge of the lake, almost touching the fringe of reeds. The dogwood was turning red, the willows growing golden, now and again the reeds gave place to little gravelly bays. Water-hens skimmed out across the lake, but they did not find a white stone. The path grew narrower, suddenly turning up into a dense thicket, and across the stillness rang the death-cry of the Hunt.

" Who-whoop ! Hoic. There. Worry, worry, worry," Barry's voice high and melodious. " Who-whoop. Tear him an' eat him."

" My God, they've got him," screamed Tommy, swinging his horse so rapidly that it plunged into the reeds and knocked Trevor sideways.

" Round you go, Pack," yelled Tommy, spurring the chestnut. There are some animals which never keep their feet when they ought to and the chestnut was one of these. He stumped and shied and tripped, landing twice into the water, until, guided by the sounds, they got back to the wood.

Martin had just arrived with a small sheep-dog in his arms, Brown panting and hanging to his master's stirrup.

" Keefe says the only tarrier he's ever had is this same sheep pup," said Martin, giving the message verbatim. " And that if there was a fox to bolt he wouldn't bolt him."

" He got out there where there's an outlet in those brambles," said Barry, " and Larry viewed him." Barry waved a rather dry brush ostentatiously. The hounds' mouths were red, but Martin looked at them curiously for a time.

" Got the pate," he asked slowly.

" They tore him to bits in there," said Barry, " before I could get in to them. I only rescued this," he put the brush in his pocket and walked towards his cob.

Martin thought dreamily that if the fox had been torn to bits the brush had been neatly cut off. He said nothing but his expression was curious.

Tommy did all the talking.

" I'll—we'll take them, Maguire," he babbled. " Gad ! I'm longing to hunt them, I tell you. I'll wire for the horses. Shall we try again ? "

" We may as well get some breakfast now," said Barry. " I'm hungry. To-morrow or next we'll try Ardglass, on the edge of the bog. Early again."

The sun had gained power and it was hot as they rode up to the tall, gloomy-looking house.

A small fat man in a dogcart was on the avenue and Barry flushed scarlet.

" About that fifty pounds," he said, getting down. " As you're on one of your own horses, Mr. Maguire."

" These two are Larry the Hare's," said Barry, " and those belong to my friends here. You can seize the horses if you like, Grabber McGill. But the Law will teach you something if you do."

McGill, the bailiff, skimmed uneasily in front of them, muttering vague threats.

" You might be in the hot soup if you take strangers' horses," said Barry, " McGill, me friend."

The little man dived for the dun cob's bridle and caught it.

" That is me dada's that he swhopped a cart harness for," observed Larry the Hare snappishly. " So have a care, Sir."

" I'll get into your yard yet, Barry Maguire," snarled McGill sourly and dubiously.

They rode on, Tommy's eyes wide with amazement.

Breakfast was ready and they were hungry. Over it Tommy discussed the hounds.

" There's a sort of committee," said Barry. " Mat O'Donnell the fat chap you met, and Dick Malone and Captain Rehan. Like enough they may be across to-day to talk it all over. Two days a week I suppose, same as always."

" You're really going to risk it," was what Martin said to Tommy outside. " They're a queer lot of hounds and I mistrust that fox."

Tommy thought it was all heaven sent. He might make errors with a fashionable pack. They would be patient with him here. The hounds might be a bit wild or slow. No doubt that could be fixed.

Barty came from the kennel door.

" Slattery's man is outside to know if ye'll give ordther for a ton of male for the dogs, Sir," he said. " If you've taken them over. They'd be different hounds an' they fed."

Slattery's man, one-armed since the war, came in to request that their honours would sign the order. He opined that it would be great times for the dogs, and that he'd be back in two hours. When Tommy launched eagerly on the tale of the morning's chase, Slattery's man listened with interest.

" A fox ye got. Begob that was wonnerful," he said softly. " From where, Larry ?—did ye—save us," this as Larry the Hare's answer was to twirl the messenger round and ask whose time he was wasting, and to propel him towards the wicket by his shoulders, purple-faced protest melting into subdued laughter before Larry's whispers as they went.

Tirrie laid the luncheon table with advice to Barry to go out shooting or dinner might be short, and then ran down her back stairs to the yard outside.

Frank Maguire, riding a leggy colt up the back avenue, saw her there and whistled.

Frank had written to his cousin in Dublin, proposing a case without names. A shilling did the rest and Frank read James Maguire's will with his eyes absolutely bulging from his round face.

The money was Tirrie's and Tirrie did not know. More than that they were undoubtedly getting the girl to spend her capital. " Two hundred a year and the child in rags," muttered Frank. " And those papers she signs."

If Frank's nature had not been warped by his habit of cunning he might have gone straight to Tirrie, as it was, he thought on quietly.

Tirrie was an heiress. She was lonely and ill-used. A new feeling shot through Frank's worn waistcoat to his heart, and was qualified by his brain. He said nothing to anyone, but rode over next day, knowing that guileless strangers had come to take the hounds but unaware that Tirrie was now their parlourmaid.

Tirrie had led Sweetheart out to graze, the little chestnut was scratched and somewhat battered by the chase, but quite fresh.

Frank said " Hullo, Tirrie," and pulled out, not a box of chocolates, but a parcel containing a new snaffle bridle, thin reined and well mounted.

Tirrie almost shrieked as she touched and smelt the supple leather. Her own old bridle was swollen and rotten, tied in places with string. Sweetheart's reluctant head was pulled up from the grass and immediately adorned.

" That dam old thing was dangerous," said Frank gruffly. " Are they here ? The strangers ? "

Tirrie gave a vivid account. It was not flattering, especially as to sleepy Sir Martin.

" I'm rather sorry for the nice one who's taking them," said Tirrie ; " but the hounds will be fed."

Frank's expression grew gloomy. He asked Tirrie if they had played cards in the evening or sang or what.

Next moment he gasped heavily. " Tirrie," he said. " Tiranogue."

A Maguire waiting in her own house. Little Tirrie whose money kept them going, handing round dishes and polishing silver, a white slave. All that was good in Frank seethed, ready to explode, but even as his heart grew hot his cunning brain considered. He had been quite ready to tell the strangers they were being humbugged, now with Tirrie a mere maid he saw possibilities.

In the first place he wanted to sell the horse he was riding. Again, the more unhappy Tirrie was the easier it might be for him. His big face clouded with doubt.

" It's not right," he began unhappily.

" But there was no chance of a maid coming to us," said Tirrie. " And you see, even if mother gave them wages in advance they might walk off with that. And I'm doing quite well. The Mary Kates pay themselves by keeping calves and pigs. A parlourmaid couldn't."

Frank agreed, his mental balance see-sawing. Then his face cleared. A parlourmaid was not likely to be taken notice of by strange young men. And it was only a joke.

" If you could step across to our place I'd let you ride this one a school," he said softly. " Then you might have a day on her."

Tirrie said, " Oh, Frank," almost rapturously. " She was not accustomed to kindness.

" And about those papers," Frank threshed a verbal sea in porpoise-like style. " I wouldn't sign 'em, Tirrie. This is private, but I can hear no good of that lawsuit. So don't sign any more."

" My mother is calling for me now," observed Tirrie, listening, " and she was asking for ink when I came out."

Frank mounted his brown hurriedly. " I'll ride around to the front," he said. " Mat O'Donnell and his nephew were on the bog road an' I climbing the Knocknasowna Hill. And I think more are coming about the hounds, or to sell horses."

Frank unlatched the gate and cantered down the avenue. Tirrie, forgetting lunch, sat on with her little chestnut. She dreamt wistfully of lands far away, in which she had horses of her own, freedom and money. A new habit, new boots, even a new dress. Frank's kindness had made her wish for more. She sighed drearily.

Just then Tommy pushed open the small door and came into the yard, to see the parlourmaid seated on the grass holding a thin chestnut mare to graze. She looked desolate and fragile. Roused by his step she turned and he caught the glint of tears on her dark lashes.

" Fond of horses—er—Mary ? " he asked.

"No—Tirrie," said Tirrie. "Yes, I'm fond of this horse because it's my own," she said gravely. "So few things are."

Tommy stroked his upper lip thoughtfully.

"When one has no money nothing is," Tirrie remarked, patting Sweetheart's nose.

"That's what has troubled me," said Tommy, and a wave of depression made bond between them. "Even these hounds are an episode—caused by legs." He looked grimly at the encircling woods.

Youth cries for certainty for the joys it considers so necessary; it buffets the tide, strikes at the brambles, wondering why age is content to float and to turn aside from the thorns. It seems to youth as if it could never want less. The cup must brim, the gallop be always fast; and with its eternal wanting it passes on to the hour when it realizes how often the cup was a mere tankard full of dregs, the gallop ridden on a lame horse, or mayhap no gallop at all but a plod on tired feet; while at each flat sip it has thought the cup must brim yet, the perfect joy be its own, and know at last that it is not to be for man born of woman. Now and again one perfect draught mixed by the gods, and that is all. As life passes, one thing alone does not fail, a good horse and hounds in front, for hunting is new born each day. Youth impersonified, full of hope from eleven until four, with the dream of the great day ever in front, and when the old age of dusk falls, one knows it will be all fresh in two days' time. So, until nerve goes, and the hour of excuse creeps upon us.

But after all it is only cowardly people who expect nothing from life. And if one does not ask one does not receive. So we go on demanding full measure and taking a moiety, trusting until the day comes when we must ask elsewhere, that the great things will yet be given to us.

Some inkling of this gripped Tommy as he looked across the hills. The love of hunting was deep in his heart and he wanted it, not for one season or perhaps two, but for ever. A long vista of cold months ridden through, of lines of well-bred heads looking from their boxes, of money to make them possible.

" Oh, hang all legs," he groaned.

" That's what Barry says when the chestnut falls," observed Tirrie. " Er—Mister Barry," a flicker of mischief glinted in her eyes. " But you must be rich or you wouldn't come here, taking packs of hounds."

" It's better to have lived and loved," said Tommy, recovering himself. " There are a lot of days in five months, Tirrie."

" There wouldn't be enough in six if one hunted every one of them," replied Tirrie, as she put Sweetheart in.

She went back to find Mary Kate feverishly boiling chickens because lunch was on top of her after all, and to meet her mother, pen in hand, demanding a signature.

Tirrie shook her small head quietly.

" I'd rather do without the money than run on into more expense about it," she said obstinately. " So I won't sign any more, Mother."

Florence Maguire's ready colour flashed to her hard cheeks. Not sign, and Barry wanted new clothes, and the butcher must be paid if they were to get on.

She burst out, her fury subdued in volume as they were in the dining-room. She threatened to send Tirrie away to school, out of the place.

This was a threat which had terrified the girl, but to-day she merely put the silver in its place.

" You couldn't do without me now," she said quietly. " Give me the paper to read and I'll get it explained. I am tired of lawsuits. How much shall I get when it is over ? "

The direct question made her mother blanch for a second.

" Enough to buy a horse," she said with quick cunning.

" Which Barry wouldn't feed," said Tirrie, slipping off.

CHAPTER VI

"MR. MAT O'DONNELL is wishful to see you," said Mary Kateen, looking in. Tirrie had fled when she heard who was at the door. "He is calling on the gentry, he says; but he is on a horse."

Barry went to the door to greet Mr. Mat O'Donnell, mounted on his short, grey cob, and his two nephews, Hardress and Grady, riding a bay and a dun. The bay Barry felt sure belonged to Jamesey Slattery, the dun he did not know.

"I came over to hear of the officers who have taken the dogs," said O'Donnell, "and to bring the horses they asked to see."

At the sound of hoofs Tommy had burst out. Martin strolling in behind him. Trevor was asleep. O'Donnell greeted them pleasantly.

"If you are settled on staying, I brought two nice horses," he said.

O'Donnell's description of it afterwards was that he could see the rage settling on Barry Maguire as plain as a cloud'd lighten on the tops of the mountains, and it was not exaggerated.

Slattery's bay had been marked by Barry as one horse to sell on commission or to purchase and resell if he had the money. The bay was a tall, narrow horse with good action and a splendidly set on tail. A peacocky brute which pulled across three fields and shut up in the fourth. The dun he now recognized as Andy O'Leary's, and that he meant to get hold of and sell on its merits.

"Them are the two hunters I have," said O'Donnell.

" Both good to go. I don't be ridin' them myself. Nothing but Punch here will carry me, but they're great, aren't they, Barry ? Here O'Donnell's glance said that if he (Barry) did not hold his tongue about the horses O'Donnell would tell a thing or two about foxes and drags and a country gone to utter ruin.

" Gad I believe I am going to stay," said Tommy, attracted by the bay. Martin considered the shabby dun which had good legs and shoulders and a keen, sensible head.

" They can see the horses another day, come on and have a drink," said Barry. " Malone's coming over and Rehan to chat about their countries."

" Put the horse over the gate below," said O'Donnell to the nephew on the dun temptingly, as though he offered a sugar plum.

Without hesitation Hardress O'Donnell took the dun by the head and galloped him down at the remnants of the swing gate, the top bar having been replaced by wood tied on. The little horse cocked his ears and looked as if swing gates on avenues were generally ridden over. He came back over the sunk fence just as easily.

" Take the bay after him," said Barry sourly.

" He is untrained at timber," said O'Donnell equably. " But if you'd come outside the gate now over the Lord's bank. Ye can see him."

Martin had walked up to the dun and discovered that he was bigger than he looked and asked if the stirrups could be lengthened for him.

" He is a Shawn Bui," said O'Donnell. " A yelly John. The country people lays that name to yelly horses with black stripes down their backs."

" He might be better than he looks," murmured Martin, getting on the horse.

Tommy thought this was an impolite way of criticizing horses. He looked lovingly at the tall bay.

"The tail has him mesmerized," was Mr. O'Donnell's inward comment.

Martin took the dun at the gate, with a grunt of disgust the beast popped over it and cantered down the long field, using his shoulders perfectly. Shoulders are things to be felt and not looked at. Martin found an ugly corner in a high bank which he poked through and then he came back sleepily, the reins on the Shawn Bui's neck.

"Don't exactly show off a horse," said Tommy, looking with disfavour at Martin's attitude.

"No faith but he can ride him," said O'Donnell shrewdly. "He went over the gate like a right one. . . . If there was foxes, I tell you——"

Here he caught Barry's furious eye, and mumbling, "But there's somethin' to folly anyways."

The snort of a Ford car sounded on the avenue, and Barry said that Malone was coming.

"Put your horses in, Mat," he said. "We had better talk a bit now."

O'Donnell got off his cob, giving strict orders to the boys to stay with the horses for fear they might be mistaken for Barry's, and Tommy was surprised to see Barry grin instead of looking offended.

"For I saw McGill smelling round the gate," said O'Donnell, going ponderously up the steps.

The two other members of the hunt were lean, nondescript-looking men with pleasant manners. They closed the window in the dining-room when in an atmosphere unpleasantly overheated, thickened by turf and tobacco smoke. Tommy found himself rapturously agreeing to taking over the Kilanour hounds, owing to their owner, Maguire, being short of funds. To hunt them two days a week and rely on the committee to stop the country and gather in some small subscriptions for him.

Foxes were taken for granted. Tommy was too eager to question. He heard that two other packs could easily be reached. The smallness of the sum which Barry declared the hounds could be hunted for, made him dream of a second season in Ireland. Martin sat in sleepy silence. It was the silence of a brooding cloud with storm behind it, with lightning flashes from his dark grey eyes. Trevor agreed with every one and the bargain was struck. Barry longed to have it put on paper, but was afraid to appear too particular.

A few days ago a disinherited nephew, now a full blown M.F.H. Fate juggles strangely as she tosses men with her grim hands.

"We thought of a few days' cubbing to-morrow," said Barry. "What about Dereen ?"

Dereen belonged to Mr. O'Donnell.

The stout gentleman said nervously that the foxes had been barking every night, but he'd want time. Here he caught Barry's eye and coloured slowly.

"Three days it would take," said Malone dryly. "It does me."

"To stop," said Martin sleepily.

"There are more holes than land about here," replied Malone, looking hard at Martin.

"Kind of place you'd want to spread ground nets over," murmured Martin, his expression blank.

O'Donnell grunted and grinned.

"Well, we'll be ready at Knock na delish. Ardglass gorse," said Barry, "at ten if any will come out."

"And if the Major wants horses," began Malone, "I have a bay and a dun."

A slow smile spread over O'Donnell's large face, it spread to his ears until it vanished in the creases of his neck.

"There's a dun outside that I rather like," said Martin; "a queer little beast, jumps timber, a common colour here, I see."

Malone's mouth twisted sourly, he said darkly that some were too handy with the early worm business and looked bitterly at O'Donnell.

" And there's a blood bay," said Tommy. " We might go and school them both now, before tea."

Captain Malone stayed behind to light a pipe. " Hang it, I was full sure I could take over those two of Slattery's," he said, looking out the window ; " and O'Learey's." Barry's grunt was one of complete understanding and sympathy.

They all walked down the long, rutty avenue. The yard gate being carefully fastened behind them. O'Donnell's nephews leading the horses, which both Barry and Marty Malone contemplated with reserved anger.

Having reached the road they pushed open an iron gate and went into the green fields they had run over in the morning.

The bay jumped with a jerky boldness which spoke of having been induced by whips and spurs. He went shiftily into his fences looking about him, and rushing on at the last moment with the desperate courage which man displays as he hops into a cold bath. He jumped well but not cleverly. The little dun's cocked ears told that he liked his job. Hardress and Grady put him recklessly at the blindest spots, twisting him sideways, walking along the bank, popping over high bushes. Tommy had just got on to the bay and was pulling him for the third time at a bank when Lord Kilanour came through the gate and looked at the party with mild displeasure.

" I think you ran over this in the morning, Maguire," he said dryly.

" And might have let me know they were coming out and had a fox," said a girl's voice as Miss Duff climbed over the fence by the road. " It is not so often, though we ought to have some."

Grania Duff came up to the horses. She was a slight girl with white skin, and not really attractive until she smiled.

" We hadn't another place to try the horses," said Barry nervously. " This Major Blackburn here has just taken the hounds, and this is Captain Trevor and Sir Martin Fitz Hughes. They're going in now." Grania nodded thoughtfully.

" Take Barry's hounds," she said. " How splendid, then we'll have hunting next——" Here she stopped abruptly, and coloured.

Lord Kilanour showed civility, notwithstanding the condition of his fences. He talked to Tommy, finding that his son had been in Tommy's regiment. Hunting was a subject he was quite ignorant about, so he did not touch on that.

He was a dreamy man, broken now by the loss of his only boy. Money, which had come to him through another death in the war, seemed too late to be of any use. He still looked upon it as extravagant when Grania talked longingly of buying hunters and motors, and shook his head when she urged him to repair a half-ruined place which he owned in Cahervalley so as to take her there for the hunting.

" My dear, by the time I had the roof on, you'd probably be married and on your way to Hong Kong," he said mildly, choosing the name of that warm spot, because it sounded one completely away from all horses and hounds.

" Or Nova Scotia," Grania replied, writing to a builder at Cahervalley herself.

" You knew my Peter . . . were friends ? " Kilanour asked.

Tommy's face grew grave as he answered. He had known Peter Duff as a quiet dreamy youth, hating all bloodshed, who went about talking drearily of the inhumanity of war, and led his company too gallantly until a machine-gun bullet struck him and he went down without a word.

Had the boy been useless or cold-footed Tommy would have spoken with loyal enthusiasm. It made him the sadder that he would do so so honestly.

" There's Herbert," said Grania, nodding towards the road.

Miss Duff's expression was one of reluctance to utter the words. A lean young fellow who limped, strolled through the gate. He was high-shouldered and narrow-faced, with shrewd, ill-humoured eyes.

" More hunts," he said in a grating voice.

Grania said, without hounds, as if to herself.

Herbert Duff was now the heir and had come to pay his first visit to his future home. Before the war he had worked in the North of England where hounds are not, and the rambling old place was perpetually before him as something useless, because its lands gave forth no minerals.

" No chance of coal," he had asked the second day he was there. " Slates, lead, nothing."

Grania Duff loved the wide woods, casting their fretwork of light and shade on the rides ; she loved the green fields and the swelling hills, and had never thought of asking any return from it but its own wild beauty. That was why her nose wrinkled when she saw Herbert.

Another thought, which she concealed carefully, was that their marriage was an affair which would be suitable.

" Hullo, Fitz Hughes," said Herbert, staring at Martin.

" Hullo, Duff. Saw you last at St. Quentin."

The last meeting had been a hewing stumbling charge, followed by two badly wounded men helping each other home, bleeding and falling as they went, after lying concealed all day.

But this is the English way.

" Fit again ? " said Martin languidly

"A bit limpy, you're all right?"

"Quite, thanks."

"Well, if they're not hunting what are they at?" said Herbert. "I heard the hounds to-day."

"We were schooling the horses," explained Barry. "To see if they jumped well." Herbert Duff looked at the gap in the bank with disfavour.

"Bad way of keeping up fences," he said sourly. "I don't ride myself, that is, don't hunt."

"Major Blackburn has come to take these hounds," explained Grania. "So he is trying some horses to hunt them on."

"Thought you said they were no good. No quarries, no prey, no something."

"This is their present Master, Mr. Maguire. . . . I might have mentioned the word fox," said Grania icily.

"Whatever it is. Every one goes about hunting in Ireland, kind of national fetish, same as injustice," Herbert chuckled softly.

Barry withdrew a pained glance which was drawn as steel to magnet, from the two horses.

"We'll be out to-morrow at Ardglass Gorse, that patch of gorse above the Sluggara bog," he said, "and we'll find for sure."

Grania's face lighted up and became eager. "If I thought Blackie, the hack pony, would jump," she said, "or the young thoroughbred mare, but she has only been ridden twice."

The Maguire's knew little of their neighbours. Barry as Master had possessed a certain status, his sisters had never been invited out by what they designated as the county. Barry became obsequiously desirous to please. "I've a neat little chestnut at home," he said, "and if you care to ride her. She's young but she can jump all right."

Grania had known Barry since they were children. A Christmas party acquaintance having gradually faded to somewhat distant greetings, but having played together they were still Barry and Grania.

" The hounds are going out in the morning and Barry Maguire says he has a spare horse," she said jubilantly to her father, who replied in an absent way that McGill, the bailiff, said Barry had none—and blushed brightly.

" Well, he has," said Grania, " and I'll ride Blackie over if he can be put up."

Barry was rapturously pleased, for Grania Duff had not been to Castletown for years. Tirrie might give trouble if she knew, but Barry saw his way to settling that.

In the meantime Martin had asked the price of the dun horse, and Hardress O'Donnell had looked at his uncle, who had withdrawn his stout presence to the horses.

" A hundred pounds," said O'Donnell stoutly.

Martin's glance travelled quite slowly over the dun's fired hocks.

" The devil the fool he is," said Hardress in his uncle's ear. " Sing small let you."

" How'd you whist, I'd give you a bit for luck," said Mat, " and after a day over the country you wouldn't ask it. Take him out with Sir Anderson's and let him that leaves you dock the fox." Another whisper from his nephew stung O'Donnell in the ear as a bee's sting. He struck at the boy's head with his hand.

" I will not, Hardress, ye poolth'oon. I will not sing. Look here, Sir Martin, give me a hundred and if that same horse puts one foot wrong to-morrow I'll give you thirty back. He's sound bar those hocks."

" Slattery will be mad," said Hardress to no one.

" Or I'll tell ye, Sir Martin, give me seventy and if he's worth it at the end of a month give me thirty more. Get on him."

" I declare you thought well of that," said O'Donnell's nephew. "For if Slattery heard you'd doubled the price he'd tell every sowl in the country."

To which O'Donnell replied bitterly that if Hardress had his way for a dam fool there wouldn't be much dealing. "Into me ear like a wasp with your sssing sssmalls," boomed O'Donnell. "Learn how to sell from me and never be afraid. A man can always come down, but it would take Elijah, and he selling, to go up."

Martin knew he was paying too much for a nondescript undersized horse, but he put his knees in and his hands down and sailed over the high fence on to the road and rambled back to part with the seventy pounds and agree to twenty more if the horse suited.

Tommy meanwhile was aglow to buy the bay. He came up with O'Donnell, but wilted before a demand for a hundred and fifty.

"And horses as scarce as eggs at Christmas," said O'Donnell. "An' a nice blood horse trained and handy."

Barry's lips moved with a desire to bring forth the truth.

To say, "Surely with a sidecar at his heels. A vapouring chancy brute," but to give away was to be given, so he bit back the words and grunted.

Tommy drew Martin aside. Martin languidly suggesting the odd fifty as a fair price.

"Offer him that, go on my terms, twenty more if he suits." At this O'Donnell began to fall so fast in his price that Martin murmured Paradise lost in his throat and smiled serenely.

"He'd sell, say, for a hundred and twenty, and a tenner for luck. He wanted to do them a good turn, say a hundred, the very horse for an M.F.H."

"The very thing, faith, in this country," observed Barty, who had come out to see if there had been an accident.

" Well then, I'll take him home," said O'Donnell, looking angrily at Barty. " Give you a thrial ? I'din know."

" There will be a fox to-morrow," whispered Hardress sibilantly. " Sing smhall."

" The scald to your ear sthings," yelled the big man. " I would give you a trial and welcome Major, but it's do or die, for Malone, the big dealer, is fetching up at Killone to-morrow, and that was why I ran over so quick."

For a gifted liar to be obliged to listen to equally gifted lies is a bitter thing. Barry's face turned purple and then mottled as he stood by. Every one, even Herbert, having become absorbed in the deal. Barry would have been proffering the same arguments if he had got Slattery's horses, and from Mat O'Donnell they spelt madness.

" He'll fall over himself. He asked too much. He is like an ould fox. Malone. My God ! " Barry's silent comments ran swiftly.

" And when he comes I'll ask two hundred," said the big man jovially.

" Faix I'm sure of that," put in Barry candidly.

" I'll give you ninety," burst out Tommy, " as I like the horse."

The pained look which wiped away the joviality was a study in itself. The wasp-like hiss in his ear of—lep at it, almost made him change the look of pain, but not quite.

Tommy Blackburn then heard for the first time how an Irishman can sell you a horse for many more pounds than he expected to get and yet make a favour of it. Tommy did not like the feeling that a benefit was being thrust on him, that because he was a stranger who desired encouragement, that at grave financial loss Mr. O'Donnell was taking his offer.

As the flow of rhetoric went on and Barry actually thrust his hand across his mouth lest speech might burst from him, Tommy felt the glow of what a good fellow this O'Donnell was, so kindly and generous.

"I'll buy another from you," said Tommy, "if you have one." This with some idea that he might even things up.

Somewhere from behind Barry's hand came a mumble of Slattery's three-year-old and a pinchers.

"Horses," said O'Donnell, "are as scarce as ravens, but I might try for another for you, Major." Here he strolled nearer to Barry to whisper genially, "That three-year of Daly's is gone, so don't hurry after him."

Nothing remained but the inevitable examination which proves so little for a good hunter, and the tension of the horse deal was over.

Grania Duff wanted to ask them to tea, but did not quite know how to sort them out.

Barry solved it by telling O'Donnell that he would take him back for a drink, or tea, and thus dividing the party. Kilanour, mooning, absently remarked aloud, "Very large man, very," as he contemplated O'Donnell, and blushed to the roots of his hair when O'Donnell replied.

"I am that, Me Lord, built up with beef and bacon."

It is most disconcerting to have aired your thoughts aloud. Barry and the O'Donnells went through the tumbledown gate of Castletown Maguire. Grania led the way through a turnstile in Castle Crehan. The place was well kept. Kilanour had begun dreamily to use his money. A small army of pensioners, all more or less crippled, worked at the walks and the long avenue; the rambling mile of approach which in olden times was looked on as a mark of respectability. Prosperity had come too late in life except for Grania, who planned improvements eagerly. She was too young to feel in every change the ache of her brother's loss, to realize that her father almost resented the new-found riches which he would have gloried in for his boy. And these, too, came because of blood-soddened battlefields. The new foundations of so many lives were set in the whitening bones of gallant boys who had saved England.

"I've got two hunters coming on trial next week," said Grania. "But I want to get away from the hills, the sea is too near here, and when you're not climbing you're wading."

Tommy asked unhappily if one didn't get any flat good country.

"Oh! there are bits and its good fun," said Grania vaguely, remembering that she was speaking to their new master. "And where are you going to live," she asked, the possibility of their remaining with Maguire never dawning on her.

Tommy supposed they would get a hunting-box. "It mustn't be too expensive because legs have limited me," he said; "but the others join in, and Maguire is letting us have his stables. He has crowds."

Castle Crehan was a long, low house coloured deep red. The high rooms still full of early Victorian furniture; great mirrors gleaming on the white-and-gold walls. Grania's great-grandmother had been an heiress, and refurnished the house, putting away dainty spindle-legged things which she called rubbish. So that the attics were full of precious pieces now worm eaten, and damp destroyed, and the sitting-rooms splendid with ormolu and mahogany, with console-tables and monster cabinets; the china on the walls nestled in plush mounts, and the task of replacing everything was so great that Grania could not yet realize they had enough money to do it with.

But it was a comfortable house. A wood fire burned in the huge steel grate; flowers softened the stiff hardness of the room they went into.

The old man ambled to his place, murmuring aloud to himself.

"Peter would have liked the chap," he said. "Been friends I'm sure, but that Herbert."

Herbert Duff had talked loudly as they walked up. With complete bad taste he aired himself as future master.

"Don't you think these trees ought to go and give a vista of that hill," he had said to Martin. "I'll cut them some day."

And then his uncle had heard as he walked with bowed head, recalling that Peter objected to the idea of seeing bleak Knockrue.

"By clearing a lot one could have a nice gallop for horses here," Herbert went on. "I've a fancy for race-horses. Carefully managed they mean money."

Grania must marry the fellow and keep the place, the thought was insistent in Kilanour's head and Grania knew it. As she could not inherit she would probably have to marry the heir and with her money keep the old home without alteration. Herbert would never be rich.

But the thought subdued both father and daughter, and it was only the girl's great love for her father, her great sorrow for his loss which made her entertain it at all.

"She could have decent stables over there, a porch ought to be on the doorway, one you could drive under, not soaking people getting out of motors, that's if one lived here at all, but it's cruelly lonely. Lost to the world."

"Yes," said Martin, eyeing young Duff. "Yes," and looking at the bent shoulders in front.

This thought was worse than alterations. The old house shut up, shuttered, mildewed, falling to ruin. No work for the old man, for the old man's sons. No crack of guns in November, the horrors of lack of occupation on Castle Crehan.

Nothing droops so quickly as a lonely house. It's walls weep damp tears. It seems to shudder beneath the spiders' webs. Its timbers creak, weird noises sound at nights through its whispers and groanings, as if the place spoke of its loneliness; the rooms echo, the dust thickens. For so long it has seen life come and go; has quivered beneath the patter of little feet, and its shiny boards held silence beneath the tramp of those who bear the quiet dead. It is a tragedy, a blight on the land it stands in.

" I'll live here, Dad. Don't you be afraid." Grania had left Tommy to whisper comfort.

" Such a blatherer," said the old man aloud. " Yes, Grania, but it means——" He took her hand.

At tea Herbert talked more than anyone. He criticized the furniture, he advised alterations, there was too many mirrors. " Awful thing if one was—well just so," chuckled Herbert, " and saw yourself cavorting in eight places."

" Might be a lesson on decent behaviour," said Martin languidly, breaking in on Herbert's satisfied chuckle, he thought he had made a joke. A few minutes later he looked with sour thought at Martin.

It was as if a fog hung chill over the cheerful room. The old man huddled in his chair, his face lined with thought. Grania was thoughtful between fits of chattering and both so evidently thinking of the narrow-shouldered, thick-skinned young man.

" How are Barry's sisters ? " Grania asked. " I used to play with them long ago, but for years I have only seen them. I think they have been very badly off," she added as if to explain. " Barry is the only one who went anywhere, the younger sister never came out at all.

Tommy replied that they were very nice girls and wished that his voice had not said it so feebly. Kilanour roused himself suddenly to talk of his son. To ask questions which hurt and yet healed after the first pain. They sat on talking until an autumn fog crept up outside white and chill.

At Castletown Maguire, Tirrie had made the tea salver ready and then taken a holiday, going out to the kennels first and then to the stables to talk of the hunt next day. Something was stirring about in a box with holes in it which Terrie knew was the fox brought by Larry the Hare.

" An' Miss Duff is coming over to ride the chestnut," said Barty. " The Masther offered her the mount."

" But I heard Major Blackburn say he was riding the chestnut," said Tirrie.

" Then I'm thinking it is Sweetheart," said Barty. " For there was chestnut in it and no training, says he. " But she can lep, says he."

Tirrie stiffened as a pointer scenting game; she melted into an empty stable hearing Barry's voice.

" Put a polish on that chestnut filly early," ordered Barry. " And put down a bed for this dun horse; he's stopping here, Barty."

" There's for you," said Barty to Tirrie.

Tirrie's jaw set ominously. She whispered to Sweetheart that she hoped Grania Duff liked walking and went back to the house to lay the dinner table. Tirrie's attempts at polishing the silver were not wonderful, but Brown had come to the rescue. Brown had already learnt that the parlourmaid was a Miss Maguire, who took her meals in a little room near the pantry, and, being a kindly man, came to help her.

" I can wait at table too, Miss," he said to Tirrie, " any time you require me."

Brown thought that she was a mere phase of an age of progress.

When the three men came in, Tommy was vexed as to a domicile, Barry listening quietly, for he meant them to stay where they were.

" There isn't a furnished house anywhere near here," he said; " but if you don't mind a little roughing, lodge on here. You can have a sitting-room of your own, and eat with us, and though food is dear we'll not be grasping.

I'd take you as guests if we wasn't broke," said Barry with rough simplicity. " The bath pipes can be mended, so that you'll have hot water."

Tommy went to Martin's room to consult him. Martin thought when people were mad they might as well be thoroughly mad and agreed, provided they had a sitting-room and that Brown minded it."

Martin inquired the proposed charges languidly, showing distinct desire to sift them. Then he said that it did not matter and that it was better not to saddle themselves with a house until they were really sure of staying on.

" Somehow I'm doubtful," said Martin softly, as he removed his unwanted eyeglass.

" You think I'll make a mess of the hunting," said Tommy dolefully.

Martin said nothing, but got into his large bed, while Tommy sat on reeling off rose-tinted pages of calculations.

So much for expenses, for living. So much profit on sales of horses at the end of the season. Here Martin coughed . . . he added and deducted showing that he would still have enough to carry on for another year.

" When you've always longed for a thing you can scarcely realize that you've got it," said Tommy, hopping about.

" I met that parlourmaid on my way to bed," said Martin sleepily. " She was smoking a cigarette, and she said breakfast at 8.30 sharp, Sir Martin. Then I asked her to give a message to Brown and she just walked off in the moon, without listening to me. It's a queer house, Tommy, and I wish you'd stop being a pyjamed kaleidoscope and let me get to sleep."

Downstairs in the dining-room Florence Maguire was discussing the matter with her son.

" If they pay it will keep us all," she said, " and give you a decent winter. Tirrie wouldn't sign to get some money out to-day, and Riley's getting nervous and says he doesn't like taking out any more. Considering it all ought to belong to you," said Mrs. Maguire gloomily. Give me that cheque for stabling, Barry. I'll bicycle to Killone to-morrow."

CHAPTER VII

BROWN came in at seven with tea to tell his master that breakfast was early.

" Mary Kate says that sleep is heavy on her up so early, Sir Martin. She was down at five."

" And we don't start until ten," said Martin, blinking and yawning.

A light frost made the air chill. It had rimed the unclipped grass and touched the leaves with faint silver. A mist billowed by the lake hiding the fringe of reeds, the sun was struggling scarlet-framed behind a haze.

" A southerly wind and a cloudy sky," sang Tommy next door, flinging himself out of bed. " Martin, I say, will frost spoil scent ? "

Gossamer webs, lightly frosted, swung thickly on the neglected shrubs below their windows.

Tommy's room had one window which looked on to the yard and he could see Barty and Larry rushing about with buckets and brushes. He pushed up the stiff sash to listen to them.

" Twinty hands wouldn't do it," cried Barty. " Here an' outside, but it's gran' times afther all, an' there'll be new men shortly."

A clear voice sounded from the house. " I'm coming out soon, Barty."

" Did ye feed the chestnut outside, Larry ? " asked Barty. " Ye aren't rightly sure ? Well now," Barty paused at a stable door. " If I give him another and he's had one, he'll be gruntin' all the day. An' if he has had none——"

" An empty sthomach is lightsome always," said Larry equably. " He had his hay an' wather."

" That young Major expects a dale from a horse," said Barty dubiously, scratching his thick hair. Then, losing his temper, he said bitterly that them without memories should cultivayte them, and went for a measure of oats.

At eight o'clock Tirrie struck the gong hard and put the big silver teapot on the table. The sonorous clash brought Barry, tousle-haired and sleepy, out of his room to demand over the banisters what the something the bell was for at that hour.

" For breakfast. Aren't you cubbing ? " said Tirrie, looking up.

Her mother's hard face peered down beside Barry's. Tirrie, quailing inwardly, regretted politely. She had understood that it was to be an early start.

" The eggs are boiled and the tea made," she said, " and the others are ready so you'd better dress."

" She is up to some mischief," said Barry, going back to his room to ring for hot water.

The three men tramped down booted and breeched, hungry, and eager for a hunt.

They ate up all the eggs thoughtlessly, and forgot to put the teapot down to keep hot.

Tirrie slipped away to her room to change into the shabby clothes she rode in. The old furniture in Tirrie's sitting-room was kept polished ; the pictures hanging on the walls beautiful.

Tirrie loved the lady in peachy pink silk who sat in a dark chair and smiled softly. Great emeralds glowed on her white neck, one white hand clasped a lace shawl, a huge emerald ring on the third finger. Tirrie did not know of the master hand which had painted the cobwebby lace and given the translucent fiery green to the jewels. She did not realize that Lely himself had put in the flesh tints. There were some quaint pictures of the sea, flaming orange and pink and scarlet, misty blue and strange green, and a peaceful landscape. All carried from her father's room and were all hers. But she loved the lady best. The sombre rich chair, the gleaming silk. The exquisite lace and the heavy jewels.

A long mahogany-framed mirror reflected Tirrie herself in her short coat and patched brown breeches and soft cap round which she tied a veil.

She went down her private stairway into the yard and through it to Riley's yard outside.

Sweetheart neighed as she heard the girl's step. She was a polished-up clean little mare, ready to go out.

Tirrie slipped the new bridle into the chestnut's mouth, took her old saddle out of its hiding-place (Barry would have swopped it for something if he could have found it), and led out the mare. Barty and Larry had gone to their breakfast so she rode off unseen, the youngster bucking a little when she got her feet on dewy grass, not with intent to do harm, but light-heartedly.

Barry came down to cold tea and a barren breakfast in thorough ill-humour. He rang the bell savagely to be told the eggs were finished. He swore at his mother for her sympathy, his face set sullenly.

Haste had been thrust upon him. This hunt was their own, the coverts to be drawn when he was ready. He missed his hunting cap, looking at the three new ones lying in the hall. No longer Master, he had got into ratcatcher kit.

"Some nonsense of Tirries," he shot out, telling his mother to engage a parlourmaid.

Then he had to go to the yard. Larry the Hare was fidgeting round a shabby jennet's trap, ready to go and afraid of the strangers seeing him.

"The chestnut for the Major. Sir Martin is riding his own dun. Mr. Trevor the black cob. I'll ride the black. Miss Duff is bringing her saddle."

"If ye will not gother thim together I'll never git off this day," muttered Larry. "They are in an' out the little door like hins or robbits."

Barry called the men to the kennels pointing out some of his favourites. The noise of wheels crushing outside told him that Larry had gone.

"And I'd get a coat for Larry if I were you," he said to Tommy. "He knows every inch of the country and would be a great help. He always came with me. Takes hounds home and helps all round."

"There is a lady outside on a side-car," announced Mary Kate from the dining-room window.

"Bring round that chestnut filly," said Barry, hurrying off to the hall door.

Grania Duff was pink with excitement. Her dark habit suited her and was well made. Herbert Duff had come with her.

"He would not bring a man to drive him," said Grania. "And he's sure to upset. He's never driven a jaunting-car before, but he's obstinate. I hope I'm not late."

Tommy, in brand new pink, ran down to take her saddle. He looked at her with genial admiration.

The big gates were flung open with a word from Barry to let the hounds out if McGill showed, and they went to the yard.

"Get Miss Duff's horse," said Barry, in his rolling voice.

"The sorra the sight of the Sweetheart is in her box," said Barty wide-eyed. "So she must have nibbled the catch an' med off. I fed her meself at seven."

Barry called Tirrie in tones of thunder, standing beneath his sister's window.

"Miss Tirrie is not inside," said Mary Kate. "She had breakfast airly an' is away to the hunt."

Ill-humour rushed back over Barry. He was accustomed to losing his temper freely, and fought it down with difficulty. Miss Duff must have a horse as she had come over.

Tommy proffered the chestnut, saying he would ride a cob. Barry fumed as saddles were changed and arrangements altered. The bagman would be out too long. He had wanted Tommy to ride the chestnut; he snarled, his curbed wrath plunging sullenly.

It was half an hour before the cavalcade set out, their pink coats bright spots in the sunshine, Martin in front with the hounds, Tommy next on the black, then Trevor on the smaller cob, and Grania on the chestnut, Barry himself on the other cob.

Herbert Duff had waited at the door until Dahlia and Juliet rushed out to proffer tea. Herbert took appreciation kindly. He grew cheerful as Dahlia hung on his words and he suggested driving the two girls to the meet.

So the car, drawn by a huge white-nosed horse, brought up the rear, Herbert explaining as he went how Grania had been sure he could not drive a side-car.

" As if you couldn't do anything, Captain Duff," said Dahlia heartily. It's minding the side you cannot see, that is what is difficult."

A long " Whee-ee " was followed by a clang of metal.

" What's that ? " said Herbert.

" That was the step against the gate, on our side," said Dahlia, recovering herself.

" The horse must have swerved," said Herbert carelessly. He could not believe for a moment that he could find any difficulty in driving an outside car or anything else. Juliet squealed again as their side swung over an unfenced pond.

" When we meet the first car," she whispered to Dahlia, " Do you think we'll get our legs up in time ? "

Dahlia, who leant back partly that she should not see her peril, and partly that she might admire Herbert, drew a sharp breath, as the wheel skirted the pond.

" I'll tell him we pass things French fashion," she said, struck by inspiration, "and then it's his own side he'll hit."

"It's the custom down here to pass things you meet on the right, Captain Duff," she said sweetly. "Some people find it hard to remember but you won't."

The accent on the *you* was sufficiently flattering to make Herbert pull carefully to the right when he saw a donkey-cart, which was, of course, on the wrong side of the road, its occupant only too pleased to remain there. Things did not go as well when the Killone bread-cart, driven by Larry's uncle, a cantankerous ex-soldier, heaved its high bulk into view. Sam McCarthy pulled over, pulled again, shouting, and just got across in time as Herbert urged the enormous horse to what he believed to be the correct side. In answer to sundry comments concerning awkward fools Old Sam wafted back something pungent concerning sobriety.

"He'd have had our legs off for certain," whispered Juliet.

"I can't understand why Grania should have dreamt that a car was a difficult thing to drive," said Herbert, the large horse ambling on.

"It's just minding the side you don't see," Dahlia said again nervously; "but officers are used to difficulties. Heavens, Mary Brady!"

This as old Mrs. Brady zealously pulled from the wrong side of the road to the right, and Gog, the horse, stopped just in time to peer mildly down at her.

"He has a face like the moon down out of the hivins," said Mrs. Brady irritably, "an' wint anear an leppin' in on top of me eggs."

The long narrow road wound ahead, working by the Sluggera bog, a serpentine brown-hued strip of low land.

"He will drive over one ditch or another to a certainty when we come to the black road," said Juliet.

CHAPTER VIII

TOMMY BLACKBURN believed that the representations of the future life enjoyed by the blest must be associated with jogging behind hounds, his own hounds, on a glorious autumn morning.

He learnt their names from Barry, repeating them over and over; he wove a web of faerie in his brain during intervals of silence. Of straight-running foxes and an applauding field. Of galloping casts when casts were needed. Tommy had not learnt that a Master, as all humanity must, had to put up with sorrows and disappointment and the bitterness of having done wrong when a field one way or the other might have been right.

" Gad, it's glorious," said Tommy to himself.

Grania on the lumpy chestnut came to jog beside him, and half shyly he confided his joy to her.

" An old aunt of mine didn't like legs," he said, " so I'm spending all she left me on 'em. For a bit——" Here the thought of the blank days wiped the light from Tommy's face. Of dust and heat and a land where no hounds were.

" I'm going to get away to Cahervalley," said Grania. " Dad has an old place there. Have you had a pack before, Major Blackburn ? "

" I've taken out Harriers and the Woolwich drag—once," said Tommy. " But don't you like this country ? "

Grania Duff said something vaguely and as they jogged up the steep hill leading to the gorse, looked down at the flat ribbon of road which they had come along.

" I'm wondering when Herbert will take one side off the car," she said cheerily. "There! He's nearly over that donkey-cart."

"He's passing on the wrong side," said Tommy "Driven cars in France, p'raps."

"There's Ardglass gorse," said Barry.

A patch of green sat as an emerald in the cleft of two hills. Between them the sluggish bog twisting tortuously. The small fields were fenced by narrow, dry banks, with here and there a bushed-up cart gap.

"And there's Mat O'Donnell on his grey, and his nephews."

Mat came out from the shoulder of the hill. He rode his dark grey cob, Hardress with him on a bright blood bay, with a well-set-on head and tail.

"And that's one sore of her mouth this moment," said Barry bitterly, recognizing Daly's four-year-old, now faked so as to pass as five. Mat O'Donnell was taking everything from him.

A flash of brightness showed behind a thin bush. Barry's mouth hardened. Tirrie on the chestnut filly! Tirrie, having slipped away!"

"There are two dogs following us," cried Grania. "Look!"

Tommy pulled up to see two white dots careering up the hill. Varmint leaped at him, and Tirrie's Snap panted just behind.

"We'd better put them on the car," said Tommy "Varmint will stay quiet. We may want her, too, to bolt our fox."

Barry pulled up. "Put yours on the car," he said. "Hi there, Mike Leahy. D'ye want a tarrier? There's a brute here you can keep or drown."

Mike Leahy, a squinting youth, lounged out to remark humorously that he could do with a dog until March anyways, and to grip at Snap.

The chestnut filly shot into the open. Tirrie came racing down.

"It's my dog, Barry. He only followed. Barry! Snap!"

A big figure on a big unclipped horse pushed forward, and Frank Maguire got off, picking up little Snap.

"I'll just ride down and give him to Hedderman, Tirrie," he said, "and I'll fetch him for you later on."

A great sob of gratitude rose in Tirrie's throat. She had feared deeply. She feared still, looking at Barry. She was a shabby little figure in her short coat and patched breeches, a pair of old bandages wound on for puttees. She had pushed her veil up and revealed the parlourmaid's small face.

"A bargain's a bargain, Tiranogue, my love," said Barry softly.

Tommy forgot his hounds as he looked at the pale, quivering face. Martin rode nearer, for the girl sobbed. They climbed up the hill and Tirrie rode beside him.

"Maids have a good time in Ireland," he said languidly.

Tirrie pulled back; she poured out her fears to big Frank, and Martin, seemingly half asleep, heard them.

Barry would take away her little mare. They would get a maid now that there was enough money to pay her with, and if Barry was angry he would see to it.

"Why did you come out so early, Tirrie?" Barry asked softly, as they clambered up a winding track set into the side of the hill.

"I got up breakfast and left everything ready for tea," said Tirrie composedly. "Then I saddled Sweetheart myself. You've no right to lend her, Barry."

This thrust was all that Barry wanted.

'Now I know," he grunted. "What scheming you were at."

Larry the Hare leaped from the covert fence to greet them.

"I was up to make certain the rock was in the den," he said. "And I've seen a fox, Major. Have ye got the cob for me, Mister Barry?"

Barry explained curtly why there was no cob.

"Well then, Leahy below has a mare he is wishful to see the dogs with," said Larry. "An' she is in an' all."

He ran off down the hill at the pace which had earned him his name.

"Put 'em in," said Barry.

Tommy blew a thrilling blast on his horn and then made a nervous noise in his throat.

"Eleu in," said Martin. "Get in, my beauties."

The beauties straggled on to the bank fencing the gorse, but without enthusiasm. Dragon lowered himself into the prickles, and was followed by Ruby.

"Get in, ye schemers," yelped Barry, cracking his whip angrily.

The gorse was very small. Dragon grew suddenly alert, and put his nose down. He had not found in, or indeed drawn a gorse covert for several seasons, but he threw his tongue now emphatically. With a rush the motley pack was with him. The bagged fox, exceedingly hungry, heard the noise, tried for a hiding-place, and leaped for the bank, where Trevor's misplaced Tally Ho! greeted him.

At this point the fox should have lost his head and jumped back, but instead he straightened his brush and slipped away down the short, turfed slope.

"I dug him out of an outlying lot from East Cara," breathed Larry, who had ridden up on a raking grey. "I suppose he could never smhell his way home. He ran off like a thraitor."

By dint of blowing and shouting, hounds came slowly out of cover. They started slowly, but Martin capped them and Barry encouraged and Dragon threw his deep note confidently. Then Ruby and Bellman, and they were away, showing they could hunt.

The hill was precipitous. Tommy slid down it, his heart on fire. Grania found the chestnut's shoulders wanting sorely as she followed him, and Barry called to the others to come by the cart track.

The hill was fenced by high, dry banks. To take these at an angle of many degrees was not easy. Tommy's black floundered over the first as Martin's dun slipped on and off it easily, and the lumpy chestnut blundered straight on to the fence, which fortunately broke.

"What a brute," said Grania, hitting him.

Tirrie on the light chestnut poked her way through the breach in the bank.

"That was splendid," she said to Grania, who wrathfully took the lumpy chestnut by the head and sent her sideways at a bushed-up gap which the horse scattered lavishly.

Hounds hunted towards the road, where they wavered and hesitated.

Tommy quivered as he watched. A mad longing to cast forward was checked by fear of mistake. He stood in silence until old Ruby carried it slowly across the road and proclaimed that it was over the fence.

Larry put his youngster at the awkward bank, which she kicked accurately. He had no scruples in capping and cheering until hounds got together and increased their pace as they ran towards a wooded hill, where they were again brought to their noses in a field of turnips.

"That'll be the fusht claim he'll have," observed Larry, as Tommy dashed among the roots and cheered his hounds at the wrong moment.

"Hould yer whisht, Major, till they're at it," counselled Larry.

It was at this moment that Herbert, turning to follow the direction hounds were hunting in, overlooked the far side of the car and toppled it into the sticky, boggy drain.

The car turned over, sending Herbert flying over the heads of Juliet and Dahlia, and the big horse fell on his side with his white head stuck out of the trench. The two girls were flung clear.

" The two young ladies is in throuble below," observed Larry, pointing down. " But the jennet's thrap is convanient to carry them home. I tied it up be the house, (thinkin' we wouldn't go far,") Larry observed to himself. " So none need be worried."

The bagged fox was making the best of his start, some homing instinct taking him straight for the wood he had been lifted from.

They topped the steep rise and turned north down to the boggy valley.

" This is a brute," said Grania, as the chestnut half refused a high bank, and then got over it with a lurching struggle.

Little clean-bred Sweetheart had got her blood up. Tirrie followed Sir Martin on the dun, and could have cried out aloud in her ecstasy as the filly jumped better and better if a little too freely.

" The fat fellow's sure of his twenty pounds," murmured Martin, putting the dun at a high stone-faced corner with bushes on the top, and uncertainty outside, the little horse bucking up lightly, pausing in the brambles and then turning, running down the steep high slope into a cattle gap, as only an Irish horse could have done. Martin turned his head to see a chestnut nose appear over the high bank and Sweetheart slithering awkwardly where the dun had crept.

Tommy's black was going fairly well. Mat O'Donnell had found a track and was pounding along it cheerfully. Frank and Hardress O'Donnell were looking for soft places.

" That is a frightsome bog," said Larry, calling to Martin. " Let ye skhirt it be the rocks."

Martin, believing that he could cross by some tussocks, was girth deep next moment.

"He wouldn't be said be me," said Larry. "Come on, Major, keep the edge."

The edge was a rock-strewn path about two feet wide with the treacherous bog sucking at it. Hounds were towling up the hill, hunting steadily, Larry swerving round along the path, clattering over shale and slaty slabs. He scorned the idea of going to Martin's help.

"That dun horse could shoot snipes," he said, topping the hill.

The country in front was not pleasant to look at. It was humpy, dotted with woods, and the small fields fenced by high gorse-grown banks.

"Be the powers we are in for a hunt," said Larry, sailing on to a blind bank. "An' this the lady that can do it."

Tommy spurred the black horse savagely. The brute had flown when he was fresh and now wanted to stop. Barry was getting the cob along as only a fine horseman could, but Larry led their division.

Tirrie had stopped when Martin bogged. He jumped off and she caught the dun when he floundered to dry land.

"If we skirt the bog at this side I think we might cut them off," she said. "There's a path round by the edge of the trees."

Martin looked at the grotesque little figure; thanked her and jumped up. They splashed along a yielding path and up a deep lane, its steep brim edged by gorse which almost met above them, and they pulled up.

"This is a fool's way," said Martin angrily.

A big note answered him, another and another. A wave of pied faces poured through a gap and crossed the lane.

Barry's pack could throw their tongues and the still air rang to them.

The two turned out on to leveller land, with a huge wood looming some two miles in front.

"That is Ballycomyn. He will get in there," said Tirrie.

Larry's division had been stopped by wire and Larry came bucketing on with tiring horses behind him. His young mare seemed made of steel.

Barry's cob was grunting and lathering. Grania's chestnut now jumped meekly, making mistakes mechanically each time, and Tommy felt that the black was thoroughly unfit.

"Carry around that road," shouted O'Donnell, galloping up. "He is for Ballycomyn."

"How the dickens could he know Ballycomyn," murmured Tommy. "He'll kill all these horses."

The bagman did not know Ballycomyn. He skirted the boundary fence, plodding on homewards.

Pace was improving and he travelled steadily, listening at times for the sounds of his pursuers.

A country man tallied him enthusiastically, shouting as hounds hunted up to the fence of the big wood.

"Get in through the gate, Major," cried Barry, heartily pleased at thinking it was over. "Mark him. Blow your horn."

Dragon spoke and hunted on away from the fence.

"He must be in here. Get them in to mark him. Show a head of earths."

"Bedam, he is not," yelled Larry. "There is a man jigging on the bank. He is not in."

Barry cursed Larry under his breath.

"He must be in. He'll have turned by the east lodge. He——"

"He is away over the hills," shouted the enthusiast. "A nate fox an' goin' aisy as ye plaze."

"Come up," said Martin, taking a double wall or bank, it was difficult to say which.

"As there is a God above us he is back to Ardnataygle," breathed Larry. "It is only five mile now."

"Let me ride them off. Tally them back," raged

Barry. " At the next check, Larry you fool. He won't know whether or which. Get them off it and back here."

Larry's turning over handsomely at the loosely built fence prevented his haste. When he got up hounds were two fields ahead, carrying a fair head.

" There's none of your mutes," said Barry to Tommy, pretending joy. " Listen to that. That is what we do here." Then aside at Larry's back. " I'll kill Larry for this yet. To get an old fox, with only a week's oats in the nags."

Tommy found scant response as he put spurs into the black ; that unworthy animal having completely given out. Larry's mount galloped on untiringly, flinging the fences behind as a child flings its skipping rope.

They skirted down to the deep boreen, and Barry's face grew morose as he saw Tirrie's shabby little figure. In some way he vaguely blamed her for everything.

Larry the Hare, coming fast down the slope, the youngster's hind legs well under her, saw a low bank and pulled the mare together. Next moment he yelled loudly as the youngster, seeing the gorse-edged pit, put her heart into it and landed with a scramble clear on the far side.

" Have a care. Boteen ! " shouted Larry. " The road to hell I'd say."

" I shall buy that one," said Tommy, staring into the damp cavity below him, as he pulled up himself.

" This horse has almost fallen at every fence," confided Grania breathlessly. " He is a beast. What an awful place."

They hustled to a gap and hounds checked on a poor sour field grown with rushes.

" He is in one of these banks," said Barry, itching to gallop to a hole and incite his hounds to give tongue round it. But he was no longer Master, and saw Tommy disregarding advice, lifting hounds across the swamp, aided by Larry.

In his ill-humour, his horses tired and going badly, he saw some one he could hurt.

" That bargain's off," he shot out glumly to his sister. " It was only if you worked and it's no working to have breakfast at duckscrow, and make off, leaving all my arrangements topsy-turvy."

Tirrie's attempt to say she knew nothing of his arrangements was a poor one.

" The chestnut's going badly with that girl. I thought that one would not go at all for her, so was safe."

" You can't blame me because your bagged fox is going home," said Tirrie sharply.

" That mare'll go to the auction on Wednesday," snarled Barry. " Sure as eggs, Miss Tiranogue."

Tirrie touched the mare's damp neck. She had slipped off to ease her and Sweetheart poked out her small head lovingly.

Little Sweetheart which she had looked after for so long.

" And your dam dog goes too," said Barry, with a bully's delight in giving evident pain. " I'll hang him."

Martin had ridden behind a thick hedge to see if there was a hole there. He came round looking very thoughtful. Barry cheered up, believing the hunt to be over.

" He must be in here, Major," he said, riding on across the sour field. " If I might handle them for one moment, or try up this black hedge yourself."

Tirrie jumped on to Sweetheart's back, sending the willing little mare across to the puzzled Master, who had hustled his hounds until they had their heads up completely.

" I'm sure he's on to Ardnataygle," whispered Tirrie in Tommy's ear. " Let them alone and work round this slope. Barry knows the horses are tired, that's why he'll mark if he can."

Tommy let the hounds alone. Ruby feathered and Dragon put his nose down. Then Ruby spoke emphatically and it was on over the hill.

"There is a track all the way to Ardnataygle, Miss Duff," said Mat O'Donnell to Grania. "An' that horse is tirened out. If you'll be said be me, I'll carry you along it an' get there maybe in front of the dogs."

Grania looked furiously at the dun horse hopping lightly over a bank, but she could feel the wooden weariness of the lumpy chestnut, and with something resembling a groan she followed O'Donnell.

Tommy's black got astride of a bank and showed reluctance to get off it. Trevor joined the procession on the track and only the Master, Larry, and Tirrie rode on with hounds.

The high banks gave place to thorny blind ditches, bordering rotten fences. Larry's mare fell twice. Sweetheart, brave as she was, floundered badly, but the little dun appeared to put his feet on brambles and rotten earth and stones as accurately as he had on the narrow banks. He was a treasure and Martin knew it. His resolute stride had never faltered, he was lathered but going freely as when he started.

Now ill-luck ordained that the East Caras had also been out cubbing, and were jogging back to their kennels at Ardnataygle when Sir Roland Anderson, their master, spied a tired bedraggled fox stealing with humped back towards the breeding earth in the spot known as Craughnagourla.

The hounds seeing him also broke away in full cry, getting to the hole a few minutes behind the fox, and just as they stopped giving vent to their annoyance, the uneven yapping of another pack came down the wind.

"The Ballinoba foot dogs after one of my foxes," said Sir Roland. "I'll salt 'em."

"Pink coats, Sir," said the first whip in amazement. A pink coat showing in the air over a fence, another far behind, then the clatter of hoofs and yet another showing as a small cavalcade galloped round a turn on a stony track leading to Craughnagourla.

The Kilanour hounds, straggling in big drawn-out array, came out through a thick fence and hunted towards the hole.

"There's for ye, the divil himself showin' the way to that fox," said Larry philosophically.

The Kilanours stormed round the earth, and Sir Roland got past his pack.

"We've had a great hunt," said Sir Martin happily, "a great hunt."

"From where ? " said Sir Roland icily.

"From Ardglass," said Larry. "We found there an' we cubbin', yer honor."

Sir Roland got off his horse and walked stiffly to the hole, his stiffness caused by extreme suspicion. He bent over the earth, looking at certain tell-tale marks.

"Yes, a great hunt," went on Martin ; "quite ten miles I should think."

"Where is Mr. Maguire ? " was the answer. "Where is the Master ? "

Barry had dashed back up the track and was hidden.

"The Master is Major Blackburn now," said Martin. "I'm the Whip. We've taken them over."

"Taken the Kilanours to hunt foxes," Sir Roland stared at the young soldier. "How long ? Just two days ago. And you were taken out to draw Ardglass and found there." A faint grin began to relax Roland Anderson's mouth. "I begin to see. And as for you, Larry the Hare, if I see you even on the skyline of my country at any time, I'll shoot you at sight. I'll set mines for you at night."

"God save us, the war's taught ye all a deal," murmured Larry softly.

"You know dam well why that fox came here," thundered Anderson. "You do, Larry Brady."

Martin began to think this neighbouring Master a very unusual one and looked back for Tommy, who was just urging up the beaten black. Tommy's breastplate was broken, he was plastered with mud, but he was perhaps the happiest man in all Ireland.

"Ought I to shout or anything," he asked ingenuously, and without waiting for an answer plunged into the story of his luck and the glory of hunting hounds.

Anderson nodded thoughtfully.

"I hope you'll realize all your hopes of a good season," he said mildly, "and find foxes of your own. This one was undoubtedly one of mine."

"What brought him right over the hills then?" asked Tommy.

Sir Roland murmured something concerning a jennet's cart, but he murmured it under his breath, looking at Tommy.

Mat O'Donnell had heaved his vast bulk off the grey cob and now belauded the chase.

"An' some belittlin' the Kilanours," he said. "Ye never saw or heard such chasin'. They never turrned on the back thrail even once I can tell ye."

"*Where's* Mr. Maguire?" asked Sir Roland.

"He was pastin' the boteen with the horse kilt on him a few minnits pasht," said O'Donnell. "Maybe it fell down."

Roland Anderson grinned quietly.

"And where's Tirrie?" asked Grania. "I had to keep this chestnut even on the track, she fell about so much."

Martin looked round, the last fence had been high and thick. He trotted back to it. Sir Roland was now genially asking them to luncheon. Martin left the dun with its bridle hung across a branch and pushed his way through the brambles. Sweetheart was down in the ditch, looking up with frightened eyes, and Tirrie was caught half under her. Martin called to Tommy.

"I was wondering if anyone would miss me," said Tirrie calmly. "Or if we should be here until they put the cattle out in May. If you give a pull I'll get free."

Martin gave a pull and Tirrie's light body slipped from its dangerous position. Her short coat was torn and a huge rent had come in the knee of her brown breeches. She was a forlorn little object.

"You oughtn't to come out hunting like this, it's dangerous," said Martin coldly, looking at her.

Tirrie's eyes flashed angrily.

"I have no other clothes," she said quite haughtily, "if you mean that."

"I didn't mean clothes," said Martin. "Not the look, but things that tear like that. A child like you. Are you a relative ? "

Tirrie said "Merely a daughter," and pulled at the mare.

"And I won't come again because, because—— Oh, Sweetheart." Tirrie's anger gave way and two big tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Oh, I say," said Tommy, who had jumped across on his feet.

"Because Barry is going to take her from me."

Martin's mouth set.

The little mare got her wind and clambered up out of the ditch, whinnying at Tirrie.

Tommy praised Sweetheart and Tirrie's pluck.

"There's a gate up there," he said. "Come along."

"Larry and I can take the hounds home," said Tirrie, "if they want to drive you back from Ardnataygle. We know the way; we'll lead the horses."

She saw Sir Roland's look as she rode up in her torn clothes, and the tears smarted again under her lids.

The horses were so tired that Tirrie's offer was taken. Larry led the cob and the black, Tirrie the chestnut.

"And call in and buy that mare on your way," said Tommy. "Make a fair price."

" Whatever fairness is in it, there will be ten pound for Larry," murmured that worthy. " She is as fresh as when she left."

They found Barry behind his rock. A snarling ill-humoured Barry, snatching the reins of the black horse, lashing at the hounds, abusing Tirrie until even Larry objected.

" Can't ye let the child be, Mister Barry," he said. " Afther we escaypin' prosecution an' all. An' she ridin' the great hunt on the great mare. Let her be, Sir, the craythur."

After this Barry confined himself to abusing Larry, who merely whistled softly in response, choosing tunes such as " The wind that shakes the barley " or " The young May moon is beaming."

The road twisting tortuously over hills by bogs, seemed a very long one ; Larry punctuating the distances by pointing out the fences which he had taken.

" There's the bank she fled, d'ye see, Miss Tirrie. There's the bushed-up gap she skited over, that Miss Duff med tathers of an' she afther me. There's the boteen. I declare me heart ran like cowld wather to the soles of me boots when I saw the cavern below her sthomach. Deep an' dank an' dreepin' that boteen is, an' I should have known the fringe of the furry bushes on the bank, but she is great great, an' fresh now."

When they could see Ardglass's green patch, Larry said mildly that he had a message to lave with Keefe, an' anyways must get the jennet's trap if the young ladies had not swep it home.

Barry's glance was suspicious.

" You let that mare be, Larry," he growled. " I'll buy her myself tell Keefe. You can easily put the Major off. I'll go up about her."

But Larry slipped away at a canter and Tirrie could not mind the hounds alone.

Larry's consultation with the owner was satisfactory. Keefe would sell and was not disposed to be ungenerous.

" Mister Barry is mad as a hooked throut," confided Larry, " to have sales taken out of his hand. So let this be unbeknownt an' just ride over the mare in the morning, or I'll tell the Major to come over here. If ye open ye're mouth enough to Mr. Barry, if he comes up, gold teeth will always frighten him. An' the jennet ? "

Keefe remarked that the side-cyar was in the dyke an' the ladies an' Captain Duff just away with the little thrap, the big horse trailin' behind them.

Larry, undisturbed, slipped off to walk five miles to Castletown, but was lent a spotted pony by Keefe, and started going down to join the hounds when they came up the lane, Tirrie wearily jogging behind.

" Did you say a word ? " he growled at Larry.

" Ye can have first go at her," replied Larry, his face too blankly innocent.

At this Barry told Keefe that he wanted a useful sort of mare which, with schooling, his might match, and asked the price.

" As it's yourself it's two hundred, Mr. Maguire," said Keefe pleasantly. " She is out of Miss Heggarty's great ould mare, an' she is as good herself."

Barry had been prepared to be asked seventy and offer sixty, but, when ten minutes' irritated bargaining produced no impression, he said sourly that Master Keefe would be likely to keep the mare until she died of old age and rode off again.

The steady hound jog sound ate up the five miles before them. They passed the side-car, one step thrust up like a drowning man's hand, as if asking vainly for help, and close to Castletown they overtook the jennet, which was given to jibbing at every hill, and then kicking furiously.

"Ye must dhraw the sthroke on her in the right sphot," counselled Larry. "She knows me. Gan ye schamer."

The 'schamer' moved on at the sound of Larry's voice. Captain Herbert Duff, loudly upbraiding the awkwardness of the large horse, and being agreed with by Dahlia. Juliet was plainly suffering from shock.

Captain Duff accepted an invitation to tea and went in with the girls.

Tirrie had ridden dolefully, her small head down. The rent in the brown breeches looked a hopeless one, the rotten stuff would not draw together any more ; pulling round her coat she saw that it looked equally hopeless. Tirrie let her tired body sag. She had no clothes, and after a few days she would have no horse. It was unfair and cruel to take it away. She was willing now to go in and work. To get tea and lay the table and polish silver. She said so timidly.

"Now you've made a guy of yourself coming out hunting you can't be a servant," snapped Barry. "A Miss Maguire can't be handing plates to her sisters."

Tirrie fell back, tears in her eyes.

The others having gone in to Ardnataygle were surprised at the reserved manner which fell on Sir Roland when they talked of their hunt. He said nothing so very eloquently.

"You can only get over here about three days a fortnight," he said, "unless you kept a few horses at Ballinamena Hotel. Well worth your while. You saw the advertisement in *The Field* you say. And you found foxes both days. I wish you every luck."

"It's got one fault for me," Tommy grumbled. "Owing to legs and Aunt Eliza it can only last me a season or two."

"Mightn't find that a fault," said Anderson absently.

An invitation to stay for a meet was accepted, and they were sent off in a big car, flying along the narrow road. Frank Maguire had come in too, thus missing Tirrie, who had left early.

As the car rounded corners and tore up hills, Tommy declared that the lumpy chestnut was no use. Martin's dun was something really good, but he would not buy from Barry.

" The black can't stay for toffee," he said, " and it's common too. There's Castletown; blessed spot."

Tirrie had stayed out to do up Sweetheart, seeing to the little mare's bran mash, rubbing her down tenderly, with tears in her eyes. So Mary Kateen had to bustle with the heavy tray, coming clumping in shyly, and Mary Kate to bake cakes, which she cut into huge triangles.

" The buther is a little short on us," said Mary Kateen in a stage aside to Juliet. " Will I fall back on the margarine, Miss, for more ? "

Tirrie was missed. She worked on, not thinking of food, until she heard the car and, going through the old landau, saw Martin speaking earnestly to Tommy about something.

Grania Duff had not been in Castletown since she was a child. She was fussed over by the girls, and by Florence Maguire, who could mask her hard face with wonderfully sweet smiles when she choose.

" They are such a comfort, these girls," she said to Grania. " Not like my wild baby who I hear stole out to-day in her father's clothes."

Grania thought Mrs. Maguire kindly. She could not help asking the girls over; Dahlia casting a glance of fluttering pleasure over Herbert as she accepted.

" Captain Duff was just wonderful when we upset," she said. " He came over my head without a word out of him. And he was three hours at the car afterwards."

Grania thought mildly that her cousin would have been more wonderful if they had not upset, and looked at Herbert almost sorrowfully.

He was so filled with bumptious self-confidence as he stood before the fire, talking loudly. It was that badly broken great giraffe of a horse which turned his head but not his body. Oh yes, he would hunt, but he liked a really good country and a made hunter. He was looking out for one.

When Dahlia begged him to, so that she might follow him if she got a horse and came out, he said he really thought he'd write to a dealer, and then inclined ear to Barry's suggestion of going to see Creedy's.

"He has bad ones, but he'll only show the best to a chap who understands," said Barry in his oiliest voice.

Grania heard them, a cynical smile curving her lips. She could not say all these things, and if one did not admire Herbert, what could one talk to him about. Grania sighed. She supposed it must be, but the prospect did not please her. The old house was almost part of her, she loved it so much. She knew that her father would never close his eyes peacefully at the last until he knew that his home would be minded and lived in. Every room in it, every tree outside were his friends, loved from his childhood.

Barry lent an old car to drive the white-faced horse to Castle Crehan in.

"And as it's Mr. Maguire's let the man drive," said Grania firmly.

"That is what you call being witty I suppose," returned Herbert loftily. "Or is it nerves?"

Grania sighed again. Sighs were getting monotonous. This was what life would be. If she was quite unable to take the bumptious youth at his own valuation he would resent it and say so.

As they drove away into a clear, soft evening, the amber sky lightly flecked with silver-tinted clouds and a whisper of rain in the wind, Barry turned to begin to rave of the day.

Such a hunt, they could see what the sport was like, such hounds. Tommy must have seen how they hunted, with scent none too good.

Tommy and Trevor were only too willing to rave with him, to jump the fences over again, more than speak of the hounds, Tommy asking for advice in his open way, wondering what he'd done wrong.

" Our horses ought to be over next week," he said, " but I'll want a lot more."

Barry said that the black and the chestnut would be two good ones.

" Oh, I won't take the chestnut," said Tommy carelessly. " I don't like the way he jumped much."

Tirrie's fault. Barry felt savagely pleased that he could sell her little horse.

" An' the black's not quite mine either. But——"

Selling the mare was but scant consolation for having to return the black and the chestnut to two urgent creditors. If he could have sold them for double their value he could have staved off some pressing claims.

The end of the great day fell flatly. Tirrie had wandered in too dispirited to eat, to go to the den by her bedroom expecting to find it chill and cheerless, but Mary Kateen had lighted a wood fire and in a few minutes Mary Kate arrived with a tea tray and put it down. There was no lack of butter on Tirrie's hot bread.

" I saved a quarter pound for ye astore, an' all. Ye are tirened out."

Tirrie drank strong, scalding tea, telling her sorrows to the kindly old woman.

" They'll kill Snap, Mary Kate, drown my little dog."

" They will not for he is below with his nose in a good dinner," said Mary Kate cheerily. " Mister Frank brought him in himself." Snap came darting in, wriggling joyously.

Tirrie, still in her shabby clothes, went back to the stables, and through the hidden door to the outer yard. The evening was growing chill, so she went into Sweetheart's box, talking to the tired little mare.

Martin, strolling through after her, looked in.

" 'Pears you got yourself into a nice row by playing truant," he said in his drawling voice. " Lord, I'm tired. I came out to avoid Bridge."

" Well, I'm dismissed now," said Tirrie.

" Very plucky of you to start a job like that. Remnants of V.A.D.'ing, I suppose," said Martin.

" Want of remnants of any money to pay anyone with," replied Tirrie coldly. " But I'll play no more truant, Sir Martin." She felt that she disliked this tall man who seemed to laugh at her and treat her as if she were a child.

" Tommy's going to buy a horse," said Martin. " Here he is."

" Is your brother going to sell that little mare ? " said Tommy awkwardly.

" Yes, because he's angry with me. And—and—She was down here all one day and I sat with her giving her some whisky I stole. I had her always. He gave me a paper even, about her."

Tirrie pulled it out, but she gave way. She cried quite openly, her face on the mare's neck.

" I say-ee, little girl." Tommy propounded his scheme. He would buy the mare at the sale—she would go up at Riley's of course—and bring her back and then, he wanted Tirrie to school her with hounds.

" She'll come back. Barry won't take her away. I'll ride her. Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! " cried Tirrie. She stopped crying, caught Tommy's hands, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks pink ; it flashed upon two men simultaneously—that Tiranogue Maguire was something more than pretty, the light of soul and not mere beauty lighting her white face.

" Oh—Oh ! An' Barry will be wild." Tirrie rushed out of the box, and through the little door and the laudau.

" Mary Kate ! Nursie," she cried, as she got near the kitchen. The two men followed.

" Nursie, we must darn my breeches. I'm to have Sweetheart to ride after all."

" Did you ever see such a wild child," said Martin, laughing. " I'm going in to go to sleep—and—dream of a good brother."

" Or perhaps a sister," said Tommy thoughtfully.

CHAPTER IX

FRANK MAGUIRE rode over to Castletown next day. He found his little cousin sitting on the hay darning a very old pair of brown breeches. A fine rain was falling, blotting out the woods and hills, filling the hollows outside the stable doors. The hounds slept, full fed and tired; the horses were all leg weary.

Tirrie was grateful to Frank, but her gratitude for saving her dog was a little dulled by the rapture of having her mare to ride.

Tommy had said something too about her dog. He wanted Snap as a second kennel terrier, if he could be lent to him.

His request could not be refused, so Barry agreed.

Tirrie was out of her parlourmaid's clothes. There was a new wistful prettiness on her face.

She chattered to Frank of the hunt; he had become a friend, but vaguely, with a child's instinct for comparison, she noted now how badly his coarse tweeds fitted, and that his hands were, like Barry's, badly kept. Tommy's, when she had caught hold of them, had amazed her. Frank's eyes watched her gloomily. He had felt safe when Tirrie was the parlourmaid, now with three strange men about the place he felt that he must face the running.

"I was right glad to be there to befriend you, Tirrie," he said kindly. "And if you'll come over to-morrow we'll do a bit of a school."

"I promised to ride out to show Major Blackburn Castle Crehan," said Tirrie. "He'll never find his way there first day."

Frank said sharply that Larry the Hare would make the way plain along the best rides. He wondered if he could offer to buy Tirrie a new habit without offending her. " That will fall to bits, Tirrie," he said, looking at the cotton stuff. " Won't hold the stitches, girl."

" It's better than the coat," said Tirrie. She was very tired but happy ; no one had ever been kind to her and it was as if she had stepped out of a dull grey mist into a sunlit garden. First Frank turning into a friend, then the stranger giving her a horse to ride, there was the bond between them of outwitting Barry. She nestled with the sweet, dry hay, breaking off her thread.

" Brown waited this morning," she said. " I stay in my own room. I have no clothes to go to dinner in and they think I'm not grown up."

Frank drew a breath of relief, he hinted that the three Englishmen must be queer outfits to come to an out-of-the-way place to hunt a rotten pack. There were lots of ways for crooked fellows to pick up a bit off mugs in France," said Frank, with the lofty knowledge of the man who knows nothing. " Cards and so forth. They might be on the same lay here, those ones an' cud be straw men under their pink coats. Any fellow could get made a General in that war."

If it had not been for Snap's rescue, Tirrie would have retorted that some people did not even try to be made lieutenants. As it was she refrained, but the effect was so evident that Frank finished painfully. " I was only kept from it myself by my varicose veins," he burst out, making the mistake of defending himself. Martin, blinking at the rain, lounged across the yard. He was waiting to interview the stable-keepers and to tell the messenger from Killone that he would not have musty meal for the hounds. He saw the two in the bay.

" Out yesterday I think ? " he said to Frank.

" And rode fifteen miles home," said Frank. " It was a great hunt and you had the best of it on the dun.

That horse I rode might suit you," added Frank. ' When he's fit. He finished all right yesterday."

Tirrie yawned, the sight of the darned breeches annoyed her, they were so blatantly unfit to ride in. She came out hatless into the fine rain, which made a mist about her black hair.

The boxes in Barry's yard were being cleaned and mended, but the horses ridden yesterday were all outside except the dun, which Martin had christened " Little Wonder." " I wonder if those two would improve," he said, touching the chestnut's roman nose.

" Jimmy Foley often rode that one hard with the East Caras," Frank said, feeling that he ought to help Barry. " The other I never saw much of, but they're just off grass."

" I thought Maguire had hunted the hounds on this one." Martin's eyes grew thoughtful.

" There is two byes to see yer honour," said Barty. " They are after the place, they are likely byes."

" We'll want four or five," said Martin, " and they must cook for themselves."

" With the help of Mary Kate, they can," said Barty. " This one is Larry Dooligan, and this Pat Ahearn."

Both were intelligent-looking youths, and, judging from the fit, both their riding breeches had been borrowed for the day. For Larry's fell in festoons over his bandaged calves and Pat's did not come within two inches of his black gaiters.

Who had they lived with ? Had they minded hunters ? Their age and weights and wages ?

Larry Dooligan had lived above with Father Malone and cared his pony that was bred out of a huntin' mare. So that he needed carin'.

He represented himself to be a sober bye, able and willin'.

" I could be great and useful," he said anxiously, " for I was reared with a farmer. I can sthick a pig fine," he added after a pause, during which he had studied Martin's face.

Sir Martin pulled his slight moustache and called to Tommy.

" Not being sure that sticking pigs would be very useful," he murmured, turning to Pat.

Pat was small and wiry with red-rimmed eyes, he also declared that he was suitable in every way. He had lived with Mr. Aloysious Magee, and cared his two hunters for a season. Cared and dhressed them and polished their saddles and there wasn't a thing he couldn't do, even to helping with the pigs. Here he looked at Larry, but in friendly fashion. Old Shamus hobbled across the yard, beckoning to Martin.

" Take them raw, your honor," he said. " Raw lads can be cooked to one's own liking, but the others is med other min's meat of. Thim are two good gorsoons and willin' to larn and get on."

Martin observed that anxiousness would not teach a youth how to polish bits and do boots, and Shamus replied that he was willing to instruct. " And here is a good bye now, Sam Dooley, when he avides the bottle," said Shamus as a third applicant came in.

The boy was nearer fifty than forty. He limped, and his face was like a keeping apple as it begins to shrivel.

He produced papers nervously, for the word sober was omitted in them all, Martin commented, seeing that Dooley was so heartily praised for his work.

" It bein' beyant me to deny I take a taste," he said unhappily. " But if ye'd give me a day off, Sir Martin, now and again to let me at it proper, you won't regret takin' Sam Dooley."

" He is a great chap," said old Shamus. " He'll larn things too."

" I'll take you, Sam," said Trevor, and was rewarded by a look of complete gratitude.

" I turned out Major Dawhouse's horses for two years," he said, "an' I think, I think, I did it well, Sir."

Tommy shrugged his shoulders at the idea of this local talent. He wanted his horses really well turned out. He was impressed when two neat men of uncertain age come in, having driven from Killone Station. They were typical grooms, well dressed, blue bird's-eye stocks secured by foxes head-pins, their slim calves gaitered. The elder, his name Hanley, was inclined to stoutness, possessing pink, beefy cheeks, which he caressed slowly as he spoke. Having been pointed out Major Blackburn he intimated that he had come to apply for the situation of stud-groom. Tommy's head went up, this sounded more like it.

Martin stood listening until, as the interview proceeded, it was Tommy who was being put through his facings. How many horses? How many boys to each? No doubt the buying of all forage was with the stud groom. Hanley grew bolder as Tommy agreed. It appeared that he was a master in the art of getting up for sale at the end of the season. That he could train youngsters, handle old ones.

"Presuming I should not be expected to go to the meets," he said smoothly. "Sending out light boys which I should select."

The second man crossed to old Shamus and sat on the stone trough of the pump.

"When he is done speechifying maybe they'll look at me," he said. "The young officers ould Hanley med fools of larnt better after they givin' him his papers. He can dress a horse with his tongue but no more."

But Tommy declared that this was the man for him. He questioned as to wages. He looked weak when Hanley declined to do for himself. As regular meals were necessary to one in responsibility.

"Mary Kate has a large heart," said Martin.

"And Helpers." Hanley fixed his blue eyes on the two shamefaced youths. "Scusing me, Major, but I like nice light boys partly trained, not raw from the cow-houses. Fellers that'd say 'How' to a horse."

"I have engaged these two," said Martin languidly. "Major Blackburn's stud will be quite separate to mine," he called to Henry Conolley the second man and he spoke to him. Conolley was a quiet little man who had been through the war. Martin engaged him also, declaring that one of the boys could go to Trevor.

Hanley hoped he would give the M.F.H. satisfaction and that his stables would be apart. He would like to see the stud.

When Tommy said that most of the stud had to be purchased Hanley's smile deepened.

He could write to a dealer or two friends of his. Next moment anxious to impress, he had declared that he could not keep hunters in such ramshackle stables.

Rotting mangers, overhead racks, no water troughs. Tommy listened blissfully, thinking how his horses would look. He promised everything blandly. Hanley knew of two boys, they were his own nephews, two lazy young rebels. He took possession as it were of Castletown Maguire and would be able to come at once. If there was no servants' bath he did not object, he said to Tommy though he had got used to it at Viscount Gore's, but he expected to be comfortable.

"I'll get Mary Kate to look after him," whispered Tirrie to Tommy. "She'll do it for me."

Shamus liked the bustle in the old yard. He made out lists for them and offered to drive the jennet to Killone to purchase what they wanted for the men's rooms.

Tommy gave a little sigh as a cheque came off with a crisp snig, the little tots on the blocks were mounting.

The new men were still in the yard, ready to work at once. Tommy's treasure still inspecting and criticizing.

He smelt the hay and oats, announcing to his master that if his horses were to do him credit he must write to dealers in Cara to send along proper stuff. He wanted rugs and rollers and saddlers and wanted them all from his own tradesmen.

Tommy rode as it were on the crest of this wave of eloquence, saying nothing. Hanley led him to imagine that his horses would come out shining, while the others would look like hacks.

Hanley inspected the den and smiled faintly.

" Whip's 'oss," he queried.

Sir Martin murmured " Yes, Whip's horse," softly. The horses from England were expected at once. The new boys set to work at the stables tarring and tacking.

" Never seen painters professing to be grooms," said Hanley, and suggested that he would be glad of a meal before he went back for his traps.

He was received silently by Mary Kate, who placed a portion of cold rabbit before him with a twinkle in her eyes, and said briefly they mostly got rabbits, when Hanley objected.

" When they're shot," said Mary Kate. " When they're not, there's bread and tay. What name is on ye. . . . Gus Hanley . . . Gus is it ? "

Old Shamus doddered among his new helpers. He opined that they were decent gorsoons an' byes, and showed special attention to Sam.

" I took it myself befor' the price of it mounted me reach," he said sympathetically. " But when they med it Rothchild's, faix I let it go."

Mrs. Maguire had been to Killone. She pedalled her rusty bicycle up the avenue, her hard face set gloomily. She had had an unsatisfactory interview with Riley, who was getting nervous.

" I'll give no more capital without speaking out," he said. " Frank Maguire met me yesterday and threw a queer eye over me. I heard some whisper that his Dublin cousin wanted to know what call Frank was asking him about, he wrote about something."

Florence Maguire sat frowning, knowing that they had grown careless about those mystical bets which had kept Riley quiet. She had no fear of being able to manage Tirrie even when disclosures came. A daughter cannot prosecute her mother and Barry would have had the money . . . Barry. . . .

Her hard face was almost fiercely hungry for him as she sat in the dusty office with its rows of boxes stamped with the names of those who had long since left Riley. They were full now, any he took out, of fishing tackle and cartridges and old rubbish.

"You'd better come to dine to meet these people, Mat," she anxious to propitiate. "They might have law work."

"The moths did for my dinner coat," said Riley briefly.

Mrs. Maguire had a cheque in her worn, leather bag. She was going to Doherty's to cash it, for the Bank might have spoken of her overdraft. But it was not enough for her. Barry must have money to make money. He must buy horses to sell to these fools. He wanted clothes, and some of his debts must be what she called "softened."

"I must have another two hundred," she said, "out of the accumulations. Look at all that's been saved up till the girl was fifteen, Mat."

Riley wished glumly that he could look at it all. He felt a sickly pang, knowing that three hundred pounds which he paid the interest on had never been invested at all. The Maguires could not question him too closely about money matters.

"I won't give it," he said obstinately; "you keeping the girl like a scarecrow. I'm sure her knees were through her breeches at the meet. And she riding like a man, too, cross-legs. She would do it you say, Florence, she would because she never had a saddle given to her and the only way she could learn was to jump up bare-backed."

"I'll get Juliana Grady to make her a habit," said Florence. "If that will please you. She can copy something."

"Would you like to ride yourself, Florence, in a riding trousers snipped out by Juliana Grady, with no skirt to cover it," snapped Riley.

Mrs. Maguire, flushing darkly, rose. Gaunt and grim she went into the one wide street of the little town. Doherty was a new man and he had heard of the guests. There were no long pages in his ledgers filled up with the name of Maguire. Taltey's darksome general shop had supplied Castletown for years and now was an implacable creditor.

At the saddlers, the other grocers, the hardware shops accounts had grown as snowballs with now and again a few pounds paid off until Killone had stopped all credit and only accepted ready money of one of Barry's swops. There was not sufficient generosity in Florence Maguire to take her custom now, when she could pay something, to the old shops which had endured for so long. She hated them because at times Barry had had to do without bacon or meat or the puddings he liked. So she went in her rusty brown coat and skirt, into Doherty's, changing her cheque. It was a Fair day and she knew there would be enough money in the house. She then ordering carefully.

She gossiped with Mr. Doherty. It would be good times now that the new Master was staying at Castletown with heaps of servants. "He'll come where I'll tell him for anything," she said, knowing that the harness-maker was a cousin of Doherty's, and the butcher another.

She paid, hating parting with the limp notes. Put it down had become a habit in her life. It seems so easy to order when one has not got to pay.

"Will I please her to ask her to charge it," whispered Doherty; "one of the young ladies might be marrying one of them rich officers."

" Take a Maguire's money when you see it," Mrs. Doherty counselled.

" Send them over by the bread-cart, Mrs. Doherty." Grim and triumphant Florence Maguire walked past Taltey's. She was glad to think she was not buying there, and forgot the days when old Taltey had sent away for luxuries which he did not stock and bought Limerick hams and bacon for her. He looked out at her now, wondering if he would ever see any of his money.

" With all their things not their own," he said. " She's clever enough to have the bills in Barry's name. And if you took a horse off him out hunting even, its never his, but Mat Riley's.

Slattery the butcher was not so easy to deal with. At one time Barry had sold him cattle and run credit against credit, then as money grew scarcer even the cows were Mat Riley's or his mother's, and were sold in the open market as theirs. The bill at the butcher's was so large that Slattery did not want to push matters, since man must eat and something came to him at odd times. But he kept what he called a stiff lip now.

" Tin pound off the account. You might as well throw a blade of grass to a bullock. If it was fifty ? " He compromised for twenty and a faithful promise of monthly payments. The streets were covered with filth from the Fair. Unsold beasts still stood about ; the shops had boards outside their doors to prevent animals straying in.

It was bitter for a woman to stand there and coax and smile when she longed to flash out that her custom was an honour. This money would go nowhere if Tirrie's was not added to it.

Slattery wondered sourly why Mr. Barry had not come over about his horses. Leaving him on the side of the road, for others to do it. When Mrs. Maguire said bitterly that it was Barry who had been left, the butcher smiled quite pleasantly. Again a visit to the old harness-maker for a saddle of Barry's, more arguments, further payments.

Florence Maguire was weary when she got on her bicycle to ride five miles of hilly road. She had let the years slip by without counting them, but they told. She did not acknowledge age, for her hair was not grey, and she did the same work as she had done thirty years before, but it tired her. She rode, thinking bitterly of James's will, never pausing to remember that they were living on Tirrie's money, or that if it had come to her it would all have been spent long ago.

" How can Barry marry if he makes no show," she muttered as she pushed her bicycle up Knocknadeelish hill.

" There are the Lynch girls with all the money and old enough to want to settle, but he can go nowhere. He should come out this year in new pink and new boots and she would urge him to arrange himself.

Her humour was evil as she rode up the rutty avenue. She had engaged a maid and then again had had to coax and promise, and all its evil was directed against Tirrie, and these people would be a strain. She must smile when she longed to let her fury break out, contrive and manage ; and she knew that any ill-usage of her youngest daughter meant sulking on the part of Mary Kate

" If I could sweep the old woman out and get all new maids, pay her her wages."

Juliet and Dahlia was sitting on the sunlit steps, coquetting with Trevor and Herbert Duff. They were pretty in their way, but badly dressed.

Barry in humour as evil as his mother's slouched round from the stables.

Her face softened, the lines of weariness smoothing out when she saw him.

" There's no luck about horses," he burst out. " That dam duke of a fellow Blackburn's got as groom put him fairly off the chestnut before I was quick enough to offer him a tip. And in any case I hadn't on me, until you came home."

Mrs. Maguire sighed. Barry's way of speaking had ceased to offend her, but it grated now as it was contrasted with the other men's. Lack of money once more He had never had a chance. She might have sent him if she had been sterner or given up the horses kept for him, but his amusements had come first.

" So back those two go," growled Barry, " and Crowe will be bitter as bottled weasles over it. He has another, a great mare, but he wants cash down for her. And there are Geary's I could buy and turn two hundred on if I could get them." Barry's mother put her bicycle against the steps. She was dusty, the hem of her dress soiled by the filth in the town, but she smiled at the girls and hoped that tea was ready and told Tommy that she was so glad to hear that he had got a really good groom.

" He'll make you hurry with the horses," she said brightly. " Why Barry."

For Barry had run suddenly to her bicycle, snatched her shabby bag from her and with knees humped up to adjust his legs to the short length of the machine, was flying down the avenue.

" Tirrie, are you there ? "

Tirrie had been helping to take in tea. She came to meet her mother, a new softness on her face. A light, as a chink shows through a door into the darkness, in her eyes. People were being kind and Tirrie did not understand it. Barry had never been a good brother to her, she chuckled at the thought of his disappointment when the little mare came back.

Her mother, dusty, on edge from sheer fatigue, called the girl sharply.

" Tirrie, you needn't think to curry favour now with tea trays. Put it down."

" Mary Kateen is very smutty," said Tirrie in so low a tone that her mother did not hear her. " She is raking out the kitchen flue."

" And come and sign this paper. Is the law to be delayed for your nonsense ? "

" If you'd let me see it," said Tirrie. The new kindness was as a shield before her. " I don't want to go on for nothing at lawsuits."

Florence Maguire burst into one of her rages. " What did a wastrel child know of papers . . . law papers. A creature who could scarcely read. An ungrateful good-for-nothing," the hard voice rose unconsciously. Martin, coming into the hall, heard it and whistled gently.

" Put your name here or I'll turn you out, Tiranogue. I'll make you do it."

" It's not as if you cared for anything for me," the girl muttered. She had no love left for her mother ; she drew back a little, her face white and strained.

" It's just for Barry. If the money did come you'd keep it for him. I'll ask Mat Riley or Cousin Maud. . . . I'll——" The word ask wiped the flush from Florence Maguire's face, leaving it suddenly cold and wet.

Caught things bite, a horse lashed too hard will lash back in despair. She realized that she had said too much.

A kindly word and Tirrie would have melted, but her mother gave her none.

" If you speak of my affairs I'll send you straight to school, Tirrie," she cried. " Remember that. Very well then, I'll not ask you again. If you ask anyone about it you'll be sorry for your father's sake."

She darted past her daughter, almost knocking her down. A sudden and unexpected victory is almost as great a shock as a defeat. Tirrie shivered and felt numb.

She was not given to suspicions, but as she put the salver down she wondered what it was all about. Why was she kept a child and disliked, and what this law business meant ?

Mary Kateen hurriedly smoothed the smuts from her face and took the salver from Tirrie.

They had come in, and Dahlia's exclamation of dismay was audible. Florence Maguire with smoothed face met Mary Kateen as she returned with the wicker cake-stand and hissed " Like a sweep " in her ear.

" It was sweeping chimbleys, I was," said Mary Kateen equably. " Is that all, Miss Dahlia ? "

Herbert's smile was wide, he said condescendingly that Ireland was a delightful place.

Tirrie had gone to her own room, old Mary in her frilled cap bringing her up tea.

" They are displaysed with the soot on Kateen," she remarked ; " but she had no time to get it off."

Dahlia came bursting into the room. " Why had not Tirrie left the tray in the drawing-room when Mary Kate was all smuts ? "

" Mother wouldn't let me," said Tirrie drearily.

She settled to read her old coverless Shakespeare, her favourite book. She was lost in the Merchant of Venice when the quiet of the yard was broken by wild " Hillos " and she ran to the window in the passage.

McGill, the bailiff, had slipped into the yard determined to seize something and was now gasping, hiding behind the pump. The big gate was shut and locked . . . the man was quailing before a hail of cold potatoes.

" I've done it and I'll do it again," roared Barry, who had collected a bucket full from the cow's boiler.

Martin, coming from his room, stared in amazement.

The wretched bailiff was besmeared by floury paste. He made short rushes, he threatened every law made by God and man, and then dodged afresh.

Barty from the stable door took him in the rear.

" Barry always does that to bailiffs," said Tirrie, " if they come in."

Martin shouted for Tommy and Trevor.

" Sometimes he puts them in the pump trough. They are all afraid to come now, but this is a new man. One day Barry had nothing else so he threw chaff of hay dust and earth. The man had to go to a doctor."

Martin suggested summons for assault.

" Well then I think they get to know that if they did that he really would assault them somewhere in the dusk," said Tirrie in the same placid way.

McGill was short and stout. He was plastered from head to foot. One potato had burst in his eye, which was blackening. The cold pasty stuff had got down his neck, during one roar he had nearly been choked.

" This is a game we are playing in this yard," shouted Barry. " I have no stock of horses, or carriage, so we play ball. D'ye like it, McGill ? "

McGill, clearing his mouth of cold potato, swore vengeance. " One fellow fell into the pump trough," said Barry. " I'd do it to you, but people are getting so dam particular. Bring me some more potatoes, Barty, unless McGill is in a hurry for you to open the gate."

The man rushed to a stable door, from which he was shoved by Barty. The new boys stood in corners laughing.

" He'll hurt the man," said Tommy. " Lord what a place."

" Barry says potatoes don't hurt," said Barry's sister. " You see he owes heaps and he has to keep bailiffs out. Pay them. If he paid them what could he live on," said Tirrie simply.

" I'll seize the hounds," gulped McGill, and Tommy shuddered. They were his hounds.

" Open the kennels," commanded Barry ; " get the ladders, boys."

Next moment McGill shinned the pump with an activity no one could have credited him with. He clasped his legs round the iron handles as a sea of hounds poured out baying savagely, leaping at Barry, looking savagely at the stranger.

"For God's sake open the gate," entreated the bailiff. "If the pump handle moves I go down."

"And they're hungry," said Barry, a potato poised. "Put them in, Barty."

McGill, besmeared, fell off the pump and watched the gate being unlocked.

"It's ill crossin' a northerner, Mister Maguire," he said. "You wait and see."

"Show Mr. Asquith out, Barty," said Barry politely. "I think his mare has run away at the noise."

"D'ye mean to say," Martin put his eyeglass, "that your brother defies the law in that way . . . often." His drawl changed to staccato gasps.

"He couldn't let them take things," remarked Tirrie. "I suppose, too, he'll pay some day. Now you've rented the stables it's different. He must have the gate open."

"I hope to God they won't summons us," Martin feeling his spine crisp at the thought. "Our yard. . . . My God. . . ."

Barry slouched into the kitchen, he was laughing heartily. "They'll let me alone for another bit," he said at the door.

"Why didn't you duck him, Masther Barry," said Shamus, hobbling out. "The spirit is dying out of the gentry nowadays."

CHAPTER X

BARRY had fulfilled his promise of giving the three men a sitting-room, and they could sit in it to talk things over.

It was a big, shabby room, its paper one of those beloved in the eighties, dingy brown with things which looked like sea serpents squirming in squares upon it. The curtains were of dingy damask, but the chairs were soft, and Brown had dusted and tidied assiduously. A wood fire burned in a huge, barred grate.

" The new boys went out to cut the wood," said Brown, " there being no coal, Sir Martin. Good boys these, Sir ; one is now plucking a chicken for dinner, Sir Martin."

Martin changed his eyeglass from one eye to the other.

Brown bringing in a whip rack into which he settled their crops, then remarked that he did not think he would apply for a bailiff's post in Ireland. " He used to duck them all regular," said Brown. " Shamus says that they are treated too decent now when they come annoying the quality."

" But, great heavens, if he owes like that," Tommy exclaimed. " Writs and so on. It could not have been all the war."

" Shamus leads me to understand, Sir Martin, that the only money Mr. Maguire made for years was out of the war. He got a little somehow and bought up every horse he could find for the Government. Shamus says they were some of them good horses for the war, bein' that ould they were looking at death before they started, and others blind so that they couldn't be afraid."

Martin stroked his upper lip thoughtfully, a hard look coming into his eyes. He had lost a brother in France, mounted on a horse with the staggers.

Brown went out. Mary Kate called him Henry, and he was quite happy in Ireland.

Tommy said they had better go into things a little. He pulled out a nebulous letter from Captain Malone which dealt of the difficulty in collecting any subscriptions, and with it an envelope which he threw across to Trevor.

" Mrs. Waring says she thinks they'll run over to see me hunt hounds," he said proudly. " She wants to know if they could get rooms in Killone, and hire horses. It's great, Bones, to be an M.F.H."

" And to have the reputation of being rich," said Bones dryly as he read the letter.

They put their heads together over accounts. Tommy found that his dwindling bank balance did not quite coincide with the calculation which he had worked out in his head. He had to buy quite a lot of horses and he must buy them cheaply.

" I suppose I'll get two hundred for that bay," he calculated. " I must buy the others with an eye to profit too. We must make two seasons of it, Martin, somehow."

Martin's grunt was not an encouraging one.

" Brown has been trying to pump Shamus about foxes," he said, " but when it comes to anything about his master the old chap shuts up like an oyster. But Barty told him they were scarce entirely, only he supposed we'd buy a few dozens."

" We've found twice," said Tommy, writing in a neat book. " Look here there are coverts and places to stop an' so on. Malone thinks we'd better write ourselves to the people."

" An old person outside wishes to be paid for five hens and a gander, sir," said Brown. " She is at the door here, I brought her in."

A large beshawled woman, awed at being invited in, followed Brown. She showed no awe as she proffered her claim.

" Swep out of the yard. She lived anear Knocknagowla, convanent to Ardglass. An' trailed them off to his den, brazen as huckthers."

At Tommy's polite " How much do we owe you ? " Mrs. Heggarty drew an audible breath of relief.

" Bein' the first time to yer Honor's I'll lave it to yerselves," she said pleasantly.

" Five chickens," murmured Tommy. " Chickens are ten shillings each."

Bones whispered that chickens were never so dear in Ireland. If they gave her two pounds and ten shillings for the goose.

Mrs. Heggarty, accepting the money, wished bitterly that she had said ten chickens.

" Welcome ye are to the counthry," she said, " gintry that won't see a lone widdy wronged."

" Lock up your fowl at night, ma'am," said Martin, changing his eyeglass ; " it's a safe cure for foxes' visits."

" I mislike that one with the spectacle," said Mrs. Heggarty as she got outside, and then stopped covered by confusion, for both Tommy and Martin had followed to let her out. Confusion which was not lessened as she saw Barry.

" What the —— Catty Heggarty ? " he said.

" Fowl claims," said Tommy airily. " We pay I s'pose. Five chickens." Tommy then whispered to Barry how he had only paid two pounds when chickens were a pound a brace in England.

Barry disliked anyone else getting money unlawfully.

"Two pounds," he gasped. "And she knowing. . . . When did a fox visit you, Catty Heggarty ?"

Mrs. Heggarty pushed open the hall door and in the opal-tinted twilight looked squarely at Barry, her glare saying "One word and I tell."

"Maybe it was the fox I seen about the day ye brought the dogs up," said Mrs. Heggarty coldly. "He was there surely, wasn't he, Mr. Maguire ?"

Larry the Hare, despite his cunning, had probably been seen.

"Well don't you see him again," exploded Barry. "Keep your hens up."

"Them ramblin' varmin is very voracious," murmured Mrs. Heggarty, climbing into her donkey-cart. "I have a dozen eggs and a pair of chickens here, Mr. Maguire if the Missies'd like them."

Then she saw her mistake. One could not ask three and sixpence each for chickens when far more had been paid.

"I'd put them in an' call back for the money if it wasn't Maguire's," she said to herself, and drove off, whacking the donkey so that dust rose from its thick coat.

"The old robber. You leave me to deal with these people." Barry read them a lecture explaining that if one hen was taken ten were claimed for, that it was well to see the bodies, and that now every woman round would be coming with claims to them.

"If you'd given her half a crown," moaned Barry. "But two pounds." Tommy omitted to mention the ten shilling goose. "They'll kill every chicken for miles round at that price, I tell you."

Tommy sighed thoughtfully. He said that a little generosity to start with might be judicious. To which Barry replied that it was like wages, once you went up you could not come down, and slouched off.

The three men went back to their calculations. Fowl claims of two pounds ten shillings had upset Tommy, who supposed dubiously that they must dispute, or they could not stand it.

The dressing gong thundered sonorously, and Martin went into the dimly lighted hall, to see a new maid coming out of the dining-room.

Tirrie was on the stairs, Snap at her heels. She was in white, an old dress which she had found in a trunk in the attics, a high-waisted, soft muslin left by some bygone Maguire.

" Then you're coming in to dinner ? " Martin asked.

Tirrie shook her head.

" I am not included," she said quietly. " But I dress up for myself. I take some tea and Mary Kate talks to me. Yes, Dahlia, I've got the tongs. I was going up with hot tongs for Dahlia and they're cold now," she said ruefully. " I forgot it looking out at the moon. It mocks one sailing so far away, and sometimes I dream there must be hunting there. Hunting over a white country and cold, so cold, with vapoury fences and queer dead white hounds. But where I should have a horse. Heat it in your room," she said, suddenly changing from dreaminess to her everyday voice. " Stick it in between the bars where it's white hot and no smoke."

Martin took the curling tongs gingerly, and changing his eyeglass twice before he got to his fire, thrust it in. It was unfortunate that he put in the handle, for when after a minute or two he carried it out, Tirrie caught them and dropped them with a choked cry.

She wound a handkerchief round a severe burn and only remarked that she might have known he would not understand. Martin heated again, hearing Dahlia call angrily, and Tirrie slipped away.

" She's rather like a moonsprite herself," murmured Martin.

Dahlia and Violet were resplendent in new Dublin dresses, one blue and one yellow. They hung themselves about with old-fashioned jewellery, heavy brooches with finely wrought gold fringes, sets of topazes and amethysts and garnets, and come clanking and rustling downstairs, Dahlia's face still red and her lips trembling because the smoky handles of the tongs had put a smudge on her new dress, and she had flown at Tirrie for a fool.

Little Tirrie slipped away to Shakespeare and a wood fire with the white moon leering at her through an uncurtained window.

Dahlia had wrought a new entrée for dinner, which ought to have sat in a jellied chillness but instead wobbled with rents of egg and chicken piercing its burst sides.

" For all the world like a man that the drink takes good-humouredly," said Mary Kate as she slipped the sliding aspic on to its silver dish.

Juliet had compassed a trifle in which the cream had succumbed to the whisky, with rakishly sodden macaroons lying among the spongy debris.

" If you'd only let Mary Kate make a cabinet pudding or an apple tart," Florence Maguire said afterwards, "instead of trying things which remind one of public houses."

Tommy, eating sirloin of beef, the result of the armistice with the butcher, asked them if there were any lodgings or a decent hotel in Killone, as friends of his wished to come over.

Mrs. Maguire replying that there were good rooms in Hanratty's Hotel, but it was a bagmanny place and the food would be very plain, chops and fowl.

" When you know it's mutton or hens it's all right," said Tommy, spooning up liquid trifle. Then he coughed, for it was pungent.

They sat down to hilarious Bridge, the two Miss Maguires being novices to the order of serious cards, but Martin, saying he was sleepy, wandered off.

Florence Maguire had, in her thoughts, dismissed him as a possible son-in-law. She was feverishly anxious to see Tommy, the reputedly rich one, take a fancy to Dahlia or Juliet. Hence the new cheap frocks, and the searching of an old jewel case. Anything of value had been sold to help Barry.

Barry, ill at ease in a dinner coat, slept and snored close to the fire. He had kicked off his shoes and thrust woollen-socked feet to the fire.

Martin went up the dark stairway. He thought that some one went through a door on the left. He found one covered with rotting baize, and pushed it open. It gave on to a wide passage, its flooring worm eaten, the walls roughly plastered and lit by silver moonshine coming through high windows, but there was no one in front of him.

A dog growled fiercely and ran to an open door.

" Steady, Snap."

Martin looked in the room which Tirrie called her own. She was sitting close to an unshaded lamp, reading. The room was big, its corners dim.

" Why ? " she looked up.

Martin said lazily that he had come to look for the moon world, and asked if he might sit down.

The lamp only lighted the circle round Tirrie. He could not see the pictures on the wall or any of the old furniture, save the table by Tirrie's side.

" This is my moon world," said Tirrie, with the new strange feeling of people being kind to her shining through her eyes.

A log of wood flamed up and sent out a glow of vermilion and gold, illuminating the big picture of the lady with the emeralds.

" By—Gad," said Martin, getting up. " A Lily for sure."

Tirrie replied, " No, my father's " soberly.

" He brought all these things with him here and this was his study. So I kept them here. My mother said they were no use. Some I got in his bedroom. I love the lacy lady, she is my godmother," said Tirrie dreamily.

Mary Kate came in with a teapot and a slice of cake. At first she looked scandalized and then cunning. Responding to invitation she sat down to drink tea with Tirrie. She fetched a third cup hospitably, inquiring how Sir Martin had found the old wing.

" Some one opened the door and I followed," said Martin, drinking strong tea recklessly. " I came to talk of hunting in the moon, Mary Kate."

Mary Kate remarked, " Moon, where are ye ? " and asked for what she called the aspect at dinner.

" Miss Dahlia was vinagrin' an' clearin' an' tumblin' in jellytine for the best part of an hour," she said. " An' it's me she'll blame becos it sthrolled out of the mould like my own man Shamus out of Hennessy's public, ready to go over."

Yet Mary Kate appreciated clearly Martin's saying that the aspect was excellent. She drank tea, her face framed by the old-fashioned cap, and told tales of former glories.

" Time was, even in her day, whin a coach an' four'd be found in the yard, an' horses galore in the boxes. An' befour that when Shamus' father was coachman, two coaches, an' tandems, an' five young sons in pink coats with champagne flowing from the hunt breakfasts. An' balls, further back still in the ould ballroom. The moon do be winkin' through the roof there now," said Mary Kate, " an' it is full of lumber. But that was the way they spint an' they spint, an' spindin' slipped and slipped till it is what it is now. When a father'd go, the son must do as the father had, an' so he'd gother a posy of debts to hand to his son. Shindilla was Castletown land once, where Colonel Callan lives now."

Martin listened, it was the tale of so many old houses, of so many downfalls.

" And then," Mary Kate was garrulous, " Mr. Barry's granfather went beneath him for a bit of money. A Scully of Knockadreena. Strong farmers, and the money went as quick as the rest, but——"

Mary Kate stopped, but Martin sensed what she had wished to say, that the taint remained.

"Miss Tirrie's dada was the rale ould sthock," said Mary Kate proudly.

Martin talked of coaching days to cover over the fact that he knew now why Barry was so loutishly made, with big hands and feet. He told Mary Kate of coaches in Hyde Park, making Tirrie's eyes sparkle.

Mary Kate went away.

"I must be dhrawin' the ashes over a sod of turf for the morning," she said. "Ye'll be lookin' for hot water airly."

Martin changed his eyeglass. This sounded dangerous. The old house would burn like tinder.

Tirrie had moved from the circle of lamplight and sat on a carved stool in the shadows, but a beam of moonshine touched her white dress.

"You're coming to show us the woods to-morrow," he said.

"If Barry will let me ride Sweetheart, but he will, as you all want me. Yes, I promised Major Blackburn. I like him," said Tirrie directly.

Martin got out of his chair and changed his eyeglass.

"Generally a favourite," he said a little flatly. He picked up the lamp and held it up to the picture.

"As you are found of that don't talk of it," he said. "Does no one ever come in here?"

"No I come out when my mother calls," said Tirrie.

"Not Corydon?" Martin put the lamp down and looked at Tirrie's bandaged finger.

She surprised him by replying, "There is no Corydon," with a vague regret in her voice.

"I read heaps of books," she said. "And I know all about Mars and Jupiter and Venus and Perseus and Leda, and——"

Martin moved his eyeglass.

" Nice crowd to study in a classical dictionary. Good-night, Cylene," said Martin, lounging off.

Tirrie pulled a big calf-bound book from the shelf, and looked out C Y.

Autumn ceased to smile next day. She frowned leadenly, grey clouds gathering and swift patter of chill showers driving down the leaves. The decayed neglect of Castletown had been camouflaged by the sunlight; under the dull sky it looked dreary, the unswept paths slimy and green. The leaves were blown across the grass to gather against heaps which had lain rotting for years. The flowers in Tirrie's garden drooped forlornly. When the yard had been dry and bright, repairs had seemed light things. Now Martin looked dubiously at displaced slates and rotting timbers, wondering if it could be made even weatherproof. Rain dripped through the broken shoots down the green tracks it had made on the walls, began to run into the pools it was wont to gather in. Air is a good thing, but roaring draughts through broken panes is not. There were leaks in the walls, and the old cobbled flooring began to ooze up damp.

Connolly and Sam Dooley discussed it cheerfully, but were firm as to the necessity of renovations.

" The shoots is like cooks' sieves, Sir," said Connolly, looking up; " meself an' Sam was up with a pot of red lead we borryed from outside, but new ones is all that's to be done. A bag of cement'll do wonders on the roofs. The shoots is what's at me."

A wild shower lashed down and the melancholy drip of the rain rushed at its will, for choice pouring in streams over the stable doors.

" There was an odd barrel knockin' around, but they are mostly leakin'," Connolly observed. " But with lengths of shoots above them they might swell with the wet. Ye cannot be shuttin' in horses all day an' ye cannot have the rain pourin' on their noses, Major."

Tommy called to Barry, who was lounging in the harness room, feeling that it was all off his shoulders once he got the rent.

Tommy was apologetic, but they must have new shoots ordered. Barry put his head into the rain and said he'd order them with pleasure, but he grinned faintly.

"Only I wouldn't say anyone would trust me for them," he added. "But I'll try. You saw the stables, Major, when you took them. They can patch up the big holes."

"If it was horses from around about I wouldn't say so much," Dooley put in, "but English horses, acclim*ytyzed* to whole roofs'll be apt to get chills on us."

A few lengths of shoot could make little difference. Tommy gave orders to procure some. Shamus again offering his services as messenger.

The rain cleared, a huge cloud sailing off its silver edge, showing a faint gleam of blue and pale reflection of sun, and Tommy went in to get his whip.

He was encountered at the door by two elderly women with donkey-carts, who bade his Honour welcome to the land and said pleasantly that they had come to be paid for fowl "carried be the fox."

"Five ducks whipped from meself," said Mrs. Ahearn, "an' two geese an' seven ducks from Mrs. Mat Dwyer here. An' she that buried her man a year ago."

Tommy regretted the demise of the late Mat Dwyer with due sympathy.

"But Mr. Maguire has informed me that I am not to pay for any more fowl unless I see the bodies," he said firmly.

Mrs. Ahearn's whoop of derision was almost alarming.

"Bodies, the saints protect me. Bodies! an' the vilyin' can throw a hin over his shoulder like ye'd throw a sack of oats, an' be off to his den."

Tommy quailed in his ignorance, but returned that a fox could not throw seven chickens over his shoulder. He was willing to pay, but he owed it to himself and his friends to be quite certain where he was.

Expecting an outburst of resentment, he was surprised to see the two old ladies receive this statement without a murmur.

" He can carry wan an' make back for the resht," said Mrs. Ahearn, eyeing him.

" At this Tommy, who felt that he was showing great wisdom, replied that hens ought to be minded, and that they would make enough noise to bring anyone out once a fox took one.

Mrs. Ahearn, who was small and weaselish in appearance, burst into a storm of explanation and intensified demand. She pointed out to Tommy that not to pay was poor policy, for people could not afford to lose fowl, and she looked about her thoughtfully.

" Not thinkin' yer honour'd doubt a poor woman," she said tearfully. " I did lay in a few of the dead craythers, so if ye'll throw an eye into the cyar. I thought me word was enough."

Tommy walked up to the donkey-cart to see five plump plucked chickens reposing in a basket.

Mrs. Mat Dwyer leant against the wheel of her cart and appeared to be praying, judging by the string of holy names which trickled from between her lips, these punctuated by " Nora Ahearn—the hucksther—Nora Ahearn," at short intervals.

" I kep the feathers to sell," said Mrs. Ahearn blandly.

Tommy pulled out his note-case and paid, being agreeably surprised at the smallness of the demand. The two old women appeared to be hurried. Mrs. Mat Dwyer, in shrill tones, wished to know if she was not to be believed because she had always been so relied on for truth telling, that she had not brought evidence with her. She could show the eggs the craythurs laid before they was shoked by foxes. Here Mrs. Ahearn in her turn commenced to pray.

Tommy considered that eggs were no evidence, but, anxious to be on good terms with the people, he gave her half a crown, which, again to his surprise, drew down a shower of blessings.

Mrs. Ahearn opined that it was a great day for the country when a dacent man like the young general come to it, and then smote the ass emphatically. Her haste was checked by the entanglement of the reins round Mrs. Mat Dwyer's stout legs, vehement plucking causing that lady to roar " Whoa " and bring the ass to the halt.

Just then Barry slouched round the corner and looked at the two old women.

" More fowl claims," he said, taking out his pipe.

Tommy hastened to tell him that this time there was no fear of error, for the bodies were in the cart.

Barry walked over and locked in. When he had ceased laughing he picked out the chickens calmly, oblivious of Mrs. Ahearn's blazing wrath.

" As the Major has paid for them I'll put them out for the foxes here," he said, laying the row of neatly dressed chickens on the door-step.

Wrath sweeping away caution, Mrs. Ahearn burst out that the price given would pay for no chickens such as these an' that.

" But it would have been a good help with the price you'll get at Castle Crehan," said Barry placidly.

Leaning against his moss-grown steps he gave the old ladies to understand that for the future he would deal with fowl claims, and that even if bodies were produced they became the property of the Master.

" When ye put yer nose around the gate I knew there would be maneness," said Mrs. Ahearn, her anger at white heat. She clambered trembling to the board laid across the cart and drove away, her face mottled with ill-humour.

"An' if it weren't for the ways ye struck ye're feet into the reins, Katie O'Dwyer," they heard as the donkeys crawled towards the gate, "ye're face stretched smilin' with the two an' six ye got for nothin', cheatin' the gintleman."

"They were taking these chickens up to Castle Crehan," Barry said, "to sell. And the hens all sleep in her cottage, even if there was a——" Here Barry checked himself abruptly.

He explained matters to Tommy, advising him to pay no more fowl claims and walked off with the chickens.

Tirrie had saddled her little mare and told them that she would wait at the front gate. When Tommy and Martin rode down the avenue they saw her in her almost pathetic shabbiness. The tweed coat darned with bright brown wool, the breeches patched lavishly and promising to break away from the patch, her small face shadowed by the peak of a big tweed cap.

She seemed oblivious of it, happy to be out even in the stinging showers. Sweetheart was getting fatter on a selling regime, and danced lightheartedly away from scurrying leaves.

Grania joined them at Castle Crehan, riding the large, white-faced horse, which looked more surprised than ever. Herbert Duff was poised, rather than mounted, on a black cob. He rode uneasily, his bridle bunched up, his stirrups shortened to give him some grip.

The woods flung chilling splatters on them as they went up a mossy ride. The clouds were rolling away, and light sunshine filtered through the tangle of branches, chequering the ground. The sea was not too far off to feel the tang of it in the moist wind.

Tirrie knew every turn and cranny, she rode ahead with Tommy, telling him where he was to stand, how he could get out if a fox ran into Castletown; the rides to be avoided. One led to the lake, one again to a wire paling.

Tommy, his thoughts full of foxes crossing the rides, of the clamour of tongues in pursuit, and the difficulties of getting woodland foxes away, listened eagerly.

He'd rattle the woods until he taught the beggars to break. He was no believer in always enjoying oneself in gorse coverts. Woods must be hunted if there was to be real sport. Tommy had been studying many books. They'd do bye days here and in the other place, Shindilla, and endure rushing up and down through the trees.

"Of course if there is a fox," said Tirrie dreamily. "Grania said there might be."

Tommy stared at the word "a fox," but he put it aside as a mere figure of speech.

Tirrie said that she must take him up to the Sleeve ne Dulish Hills to show him some holes there and a patch of gorse where foxes bred.

"Barty says he heard there was a litter there, even now," she said.

They rode slowly, thick moss yielding beneath the horses' feet, heavy boughs laced over the ride, whipping their faces as they pushed under or through them. Rabbits scuttled to cover, and a few pheasants ran across the open, Vixen and Snap chasing the rabbits without being rebuked.

The others were some little way behind, not too far to hear Herbert's loud voice laying down plans for preserving, cutting away trees and putting up a house for luncheon in one rocky glade, if he stayed there.

"He comes in for it," Tommy looked back.

He listened while Tirrie told him the Duff history. How the war had brought them riches too late.

"And now I suppose the girl will be married to that hopeless bounder," said Tommy between his teeth. He turned in his saddle again. Tirrie had little knowledge of the world, but she saw something in his face which she had never seen before, but with woman's instinct recognised.

"I believe her old father worships the place," Tirrie said, "and so—I suppose for his sake——"

"Money is a very wonderful thing," said Tommy slowly. "A little of it brought me here, Tirrie, and now I see how much I want of it to slay Dragons with. If I were a millionaire—Oh hang that Herbert!"

Tirrie's soft "I understand" riveted a bond of union between them. Established a secret and unbreathed of compact. Tommy would for the future come to Tiranogue with his troubles and the girl knew it. Knew, too, for the first time, how quickly hearts can be lost, and where Tommy Blackburn's had gone to. She turned her head to smile at him, a flashing smile of complete good fellowship not lost on those who followed.

"What a splendid thing that would be for poor little Tirrie Maguire," said Grania without any enthusiasm.

Sir Martin replied "Excellent" in flat tones. "Yet somehow—Tommy and a moonsprite," he muttered.

They came to a broken-down part of the bounds fence, where it was possible to climb on to the bank and scramble over fallen stones into the deep, dry ditch outside.

Tirrie put Sweetheart at the bank, and then riding along the top, found the place to go down.

"It's quite easy," she said temptingly. "Just a scramble."

Tommy eyed the steep descent and went down dubiously. The white-faced carriage horse when asked to jump on to the bank explained as well as it knew how, that it had never been educated to jump banks and that it preferred not to. This being a docile animal it pawed at the top with its large feet and receiving a whack behind, hoisted its quarters in pained protest, the clambering down it made nothing of, merely snorting as the stones fell.

Herbert had raised his voice vainly to insist on their finding a gate. He was only on a carriage pony, it was a horrid place. The black cob resented being left alone as its companions disappeared, so suddenly reared, jumped up like a deer and turning sharp, deposited Herbert in a fringe of thorn bushes, which gave way under his weight with a slowness amounting to torture.

"We'll catch you if you stay long enough, Herbert," comforted Grania, trying not to laugh. "Just wait, I've got the horse."

The furious voice of Captain Duff, asking how the something he was to wait mingled with the cracking and rendering of thorn bushes, and the hedge broke under the weight.

The long youth fell with a thump, and the white-faced horse stared at him mildly.

Herbert arose, torn and ruffled, to abuse them all for bringing carriage-horses across country and to hit the too willing black cob across the head for having jumped like a circular saw, as he put it.

"There are two other quite little jumps," apologized Tirrie. "A ditch to get into the bog, and a very little bank. Captain Duff could get down and lead if he is afraid of falling off again." Before Herbert's outburst, Tirrie realized that she had said the wrong thing. Herbert explained that even the finest riders fall when horses swerve from under them, and hit the poor cob again.

The cob was an animal of spirit. It tore its head away and showed symptoms of bolting.

The day had changed—a rain-washed white-powdered sky, was clear of heavy clouds. The hills were cut sharply as cameos, flecked by shadows on their sides. The whole country was cleanly clear. The green brilliant, the bogs ochre and brown.

Tommy rode with Grania now, and watched her look at it wistfully.

"It never seems to be like this anywhere else," she said. "If one is Irish, only Ireland with all her follies will content one. It is all so lonely and yet a companion in itself. See, the sea!"

They had topped a sharp smoothly turfed hill, and could see a silver-grey streak of water.

The path wound along the hill down to the ragged edge of a brown patch of bog.

Grania talked dreamily, half unaware of how much she was confiding. She would like to live at Castle Crehan every summer and go away for good hunting in the winter. She told him how her father loved his home, how Peter's death had broken the old man.

" I think the thought of its being deserted hurts him worst of all," Grania said. " As if he were leaving some child to starve and die, alone and unhelped. And Herbert talks of alterations, but as often of the place being too lonely to live in and—it must come to him. But if I can promise father that it shall be kept open." She flushed, dreary despair in her eyes. " It might comfort him," she said.

Tommy flushed also, his eyes were stormy. He had kept silence, letting Grania talk, for he knew that an ill-timed word would have shown her all that she was saying.

" There is only a very little ditch to cross to go into the bog," said Tirrie to Martin ; " a donkey could jump it."

It was really from edge to edge a fair-sized ditch, and unpleasantly deep, but the edges sloped so that horses could run down and jump against the opposite bank.

If Herbert had not got out his whip to teach the cob manners, all might have been well ; but he hit the poor little beast three times across the neck, and just as Tirrie hopped over calling to them to turn at once and keep on the path, the cob rushed madly after her, cleared the ditch from field to field and ran away into the bog.

Lightness of feet and fury took him safely from tussock to tussock until he suddenly plunged to his saddle flaps in a boggy pea-soup, thickened with fibres and roots, and stood there trembling.

" It is such a very dangerous bog," said Tirrie thoughtfully. " In some places one sinks right down. Only poachers know it properly. Barry took a man there last year and only he threw his gun across, he was gone."

Trevor put his hands together and shouted these comments as if through a megaphone, roaring each word slowly and distinctly. To which Herbert Duff replied acidly that he was not submarines, and smote the black cob.

"If he gets to either side there he will certainly go down," said Tirrie in the same thoughtful voice.

Captain Duff showed signs of fear and got off, poising himself on a shivering tussock.

A man who had been mending a fence left his work to come and look on.

"He will be swallyed for sure," he remarked in a voice as calm as Tirrie's.

"And we could only say a prayer over the bubbles," said Grania hysterically. "I do wish the cob was out."

She put the white-faced horse at the trench, that docile animal again protesting that he knew nothing of jumping, but, responding to the whip, he slid down until a plunge into the dank water seemed inevitable, and then lurched clumsily across.

"I shall hunt this horse," said Grania proudly.

Captain Duff wished to know what he was to do as the dam tussock was going down and the cob was sinking. He reviled the folly of coming across country on carriage-horses and he lost his balance.

The thump with which he fell on to the cob's quarters roused that terrified animal from its lethargy. With a frenzied snort it wallowed out and got back by the way it had come in, leaving Herbert to roll flat into the chocolate hued bath its struggles had made.

As he rose clutching the tussock, Martin opined that the language would dry the bog. Herbert leapt in the cob's footprints, advised by Tirrie to keep in them, and came, dripping mud, to safety.

" If you had gone in right or left we should never have seen you again," Tirrie said thoughtfully.

" There is no one but snhipes an' Mr. Maguire can venture there," said the countryman. " The horse is gone home."

The black cob had leaped the trench and was tearing homewards, kicking as he went. As they had all got across the trench no one pursued him.

" You just jump it yourself, Herbert, and see that cob is well dried," said Grania, jogging on.

" Don't they take it very aisy an' you so near death," said the man. " Lep out. That ditch is a fright for depth."

Captain Duff strode homewards in furious mood.

The others rode on skirting the bog and then climbing up to a patch of gorse on a hill where Tirrie pointed out two holes to Tommy.

They left their horses and walked through the straggling gorse, Tommy excited by the thought that this was all part of his new profession.

" Yes, it would be very suitable," said Grania Duff looking back towards Castle Crehan.

CHAPTER XI

THE arrival of the horses from England was quite an event at Castletown. Tommy's grey was blooming, his chestnut looked worth many hundreds. The little piebald seemed to know that Trevor had rescued him, and stepped in as if on air. Martin's two were also well.

There was much rustling down of golden straw and hammerings as holes were mended, the whole thing crowned by the state arrival of Tommy's stud groom, who drove in a car from Killone.

He was pleased to consider the two 'osses quite nice, but he pointed out that they had been neglected. He told this to Tommy, who considered himself lucky to have secured a treasure. The bay had passed a vet so joined the stud, but Tommy was surprised when Hanley asked for the nice dark chestnut.

" Nice 'oss," he said ; " best of the lot."

When Tommy stated his reasons for not having purchased that animal Hanley smiled so deftly that Tommy felt his own ignorance. " A dead unfit 'oss ridden by a young lady." Hanley opined that Tommy was passing precious gold if he let this horse go. They went through the landau into the outside stables.

" Thought you didn't like him last time," said Tommy, looking with dislike at the lumpy chestnut.

Hanley explained that away easily. In fact he would have said nothing now, but he'd heard a whisper about a man coming to buy.

The end of it was that Tommy found himself the possessor of the chestnut, with a V.S.'s certificate dated a week before, and his boxes began to look full.

" An' I have written to my friend Dickenson," said Hanley, " who'll send over a few on trial to us. Also I have ordered the forage from Cara. Our 'osses, Sir, could not do on this stuff."

Here he pulled up a strand of sweet silver hay. Shamus had bought the best of everything.

Hanley's requirements lengthened as the day grew on. He dined delicately off rabbit and bacon, and requested beer or porter daily. He offended old Mary Kate and positively wailed over the harness room, which wouldn't do at all for him.

Tommy, being overawed, asked for the one time servants' hall, a small room off the kitchen with a separate entrance to the yard, and here Mr. Hanley lighted a huge fire and disposed his meagre display of saddlery.

" An' there he'll sthay most of his time," remarked Sam, " callin' out directions. That is his game always. Ten per cent on orthers an' an aisy chair suits Gus Hanley, I tell ye."

Martin had produced a motor, and they drove all over the country looking at fences and hills. The flat green pastures of Tommy's dream were not. Hills and bog and woods everywhere, but Tommy refused to be disappointed.

" Just as well to learn in a poor country. Once he knew his business he might be taken as huntsman somewhere when his money was all gone." Here he sighed, it was melting rapidly.

Mat O'Donnell showed them his woods and begged them to arrange a meet there. He'd have the fox for sure. They were welcomed in the country though people's hopes of sport seemed to dwell upon the next season and not this. Tommy putting it down to mistrust of his powers and determining inwardly to show them what he could do.

Barry lounged about listening to Tommy's rhapsodies. He had replaced the chestnut with a lengthy, unsound brown, and his new pink coat was ready.

Without showing any signs of pity he sent the little mare to the auction, where she was knocked down for twenty guineas to a bid from the auctioneer's man. Barry knowing that he would never see the money, as he owed a large sum to the auctioneer.

He stayed in the town for some time looking about for another horse, and drove home just as Sweetheart was ridden in by Pat.

"But—the brute was sold," said Barry, staring.

Tommy, who was in the yard, said languidly that he had taken a fancy to her and bought her.

Tirrie was waiting in the mare's box, her face so full of mischief that Barry's suspicions awoke.

"You meant to buy her," he stuttered. "Then why not have bought her straight from me?"

"Didn't make any difference, did it?" said Tommy.

"Except that I'd have got the money," roared Barry, going off with a furious look at Tirrie.

It was another item in the score against her. She had known that Blackburn wanted the mare and never told him. He did not guess the real solution, but he went in storming to his mother.

Twenty pounds gone to that wastrel Scully. Twenty pounds that would have done to buy him that screw mare of O'Flaherty's, a great hunter if she did run away sometimes.

He left Tirrie with her arms round the mare's neck, happy and yet afraid. They might refuse to allow her to ride at all.

When she went to her sitting-room, Martin followed her. He wanted to see the old furniture by daylight. It was beautiful and of great value. Martin knew very little, but he guessed that a pair of Chelsea candlesticks and some Dresden figures would probably relieve the financial crisis of the Maguires if they were sent to Christies. The smiling lady, her emerald gleaming on her exquisitely modelled hand, looked down from over the chimney-piece.

"They were all father's," Tirrie said, "Mary Kate often tells me that he loved them, and my mother told me she did not care for old rubbish.

"They never thought of selling any of them." Martin touched the glaze on the candlesticks.

"They were my father's." Tirrie looked a moonsprite even in the blindless glare coming through the high windows. "And I believe they are mine, but if they were of any value," she shrugged her shoulders.

"You looked very happy to-day." Martin leant against the mantelpiece.

"When my mare came back." Tirrie stared into the golden ash-fringed glow of her turf fire. "Yes, if there is ever anything I can do for Major Blackburn. . . . If I could make a fox of myself and run before his hounds I would," she said wistfully. "But I know how I can help him. I know already what he wants."

"Relating to a gentleman with wings and no other clothing," Martin's look was a gloomy one. "Tommy's susceptible."

"Oh, if it's only a fancy," said Tirrie doubtfully. "We are going to the Castle this afternoon, won't you come ?" she went on.

Martin said "No thank you," stiffly He wandered round the room, finding new treasures stuck away in old cabinets. If these things were really Tirrie's she need not go out to ride in old brown breeches.

"There are two peculiarly ugly figures here," he said 'These you've hidden. If you'd let me send them away, I believe they'd produce you a new habit."

Tirrie looked dubiously at the figures, and at a chair where her breeches, freshly darned, reposed. The figures were her own and she gave way to temptation.

Martin promised not to tell anyone. He took away the china figures, simpering shepherdesses, and left Tirrie alone. Kindness was a very strange food to her. She could not understand its taste. She sat alone quietly, looking into the yard where the new men were working, and Hanley giving orders, until she heard her mother's angry voice calling her, and ran out.

"Tirrie, Tiranogue. Idling by yourself as usual while your mother slaves. Mend these." Some tablecloths were pitched at Tirrie's feet.

Florence Maguire's expression was of the "I'll-be-even-with-you-yet" type. She looked malignantly at her slender daughter. Tirrie had expected a new order to sign a paper. She wondered at her mother's complete rout.

"Don't you run after these young men," added Florence Maguire coarsely, "or have your Cousin Frank hanging about. D'ye hear?"

Tirrie smoothed out the battered tablecloths. The silent question was in her heart. Why did her mother dislike her so thoroughly? But silence was always the easiest answer to make. Tirrie knew how to say nothing and take her own way quietly.

"I have been asked to tea by Grania," she said at last. "Am I not to go?"

Mrs. Maguire looked at her shabby little figure. Tirrie's jersey was an old one of Dahlia's. Her skirt had belonged to Juliet, but an invitation to Castle Crehan was to her almost a command.

"Oh go, looking like a kitchen-maid," she flashed out, banging the baize door as she went away.

So Tirrie walked with Tommy through the woods, and on the way he talked shyly of hopes which could never be, and the annoyance of getting all you thought you wanted, and then discovering you wanted more, which if Tommy had stopped to think is the true extract of life.

Then he switched off to hounds, discussing checks and cold scenting days, but always optimistically sure that his days would be of the " catch-'em-if-you-can " variety.

As they crossed the fence dividing the properties, two people scuttled away into the bushes, and then Martin, walking lazily, jumped the fence and asked Tirrie where he could get some good ash-plants.

" I just strolled over here to look," he said carelessly. " Long walk too," he yawned.

" Well this is a beech wood," said Tirrie gravely; " but if you go straight on and down the second avenue to the left and through the old Deer-park gate, there are heaps of ash-plants in the wood to the right there."

Martin looked lazy. When Tommy advised him to come on to tea, he thought he would.

Poor little Tirrie had smartened her washed-out blouse with a lace ruffle of Mary Kateen's, a coarse atrocity, which he longed to take off and burn. Her shoes were quite palpably patched, and her old skirt had a burn in it.

As they got to the front avenue, Herbert Duff came out of the trees whistling loudly, and wondering that he had not heard their voices. He disliked the note in Tirrie's voice as she said that perhaps he had been walking too fast. She caught a glimpse of her sister Dahlia's rose-coloured jersey.

There was the same restraint cast on them all at Castle Crehan. Herbert always either aggressively impressive, or equally aggressively bored. The old man sitting with deep lines graven on his ivory pale face, his hands clasped, his eyes watching his heir.

" Take just years to get up pheasants here," growled Herbert, " and without shooting who'd stand the place. The keeper says every one poaches and having got into the habit of it will be hard to stop. I told him to start prosecuting."

Lord Kilanour sat up straighter, looking troubled.

"They're sensible. They won't come in once they know shooting's a business," he said.

"Don't expect I'll even bother it much," yawned Herbert. "Give me England and hard pavements and the country when you want it."

Kilanour looked wistfully at his daughter. Would Grania take on herself to make life at Castle Crehan assured, to keep it open. His wife's grave was in the park. Supposing it was neglected. Then there were his roses, his trees, his rock garden, all his delights. He had lived too lonely a life to realize that all our pursuits are futile things preserved for a little space as poor So-and-so's and then altered or forgotten, because nature is merciful and sees that we remove the blister of perpetual sorrow and memory. We do not forget, but we cannot always remember. Mercifully, since all the bitter sorrow on earth cannot bring back our dead even for one moment.

But an old man who has dreamt away his life, planning for his only son, believes all that he loves to be of infinite importance. He had pinched and denied himself to make the place fair for his Peter; instead, a man lounged in Peter's chair and was ready to let it all go to ruin.

"I'll rent the place from you, Herbert," Grania said with a lightness which hid an eager tremble in her voice.

"Oh no. I might picnic here sometimes. I won't let it to you, Grania."

Herbert's eyes were full of quiet meaning. He meant in due time to possess Grania's money.

"Not dead yet. Not dead yet," said Kilanour aloud to himself, and with startling distinctness. "Young cub, Herbert. Not dead yet. Not seventy yet."

Herbert had the grace to blush. The look which Grania gave him did not give promise of a comfortable wedded life.

Martin and Tommy went away early. Their first meet was next day and there were many things to see to. Tirrie sat on talking to Grania.

The elder girl longed to be able to give a dress to the pathetically shabby little figure. She had not known the Maguires since they were children, but now a bond of sadness made her like Tirrie.

She found herself talking of Herbert. Herbert replacing Peter.

" And some day I suppose I shall marry him to please father," she said, winking back smarting tears.

" But you see when your father is not there and won't trouble any more, you will still be married," said Tirrie sapiently.

" He is so sad and broken now. Seems to cling to the place as if it were Peter's still. To want to see it as Peter would have loved it. I'd give up being an heiress so willingly if I could see Peter walk in, and that look go out of father's eyes."

Tirrie, very shyly, said that she could not marry anyone she did not like.

" You've been happy and loved so you don't know," Tirrie said. " But I've seen so much of people who don't like me, and who think me a fool for growing flowers and reading books. And somehow I think it would always be like that. No one ever took any notice of me until Major Blackburn took the hounds."

Grania said " Oh " in a displeased voice, her voice grew dull.

But she kissed little Tirrie when they parted and determined that a new dress should go by post to her. She had learnt many things about Tirrie's life that afternoon.

Tirrie went slowly through the quiet dusk. Wild things rustled in the undergrowth, Snap making occasional darts into the gloom, and returning once with a rat. The night would be star-spangled later, but under the trees it crouched in garments of grey and black. Tirrie walked through a bank of mist gasping at the chill, out of it on to the bounds fence and into the thinned woods of Castletown.

"I've been waiting for you this hour," said Frank Maguire, getting up off a stone.

"Your mother told me you were in Killone and didn't look best pleased to see me, but I asked that third man, Trevor; he was fussing with his horses, and he told me you were at the Duff's. I brought you a whip for to-morrow, Tirrie."

Tirrie ran on to the light to look at it. A cheap little crop, but it bore a T on its silver mount, and gave Tirrie more pleasure than if it had been a diamond brooch.

"And you can ride my black," said Frank in a kind voice.

When Tirrie explained that Sweetheart was back, Frank laughed at first, and then his laughter gave place to gloom.

"Blackburn got her back for you?"

"He got her for himself." Tirrie admired Sweetheart thoroughly. "But he's asked me to ride her until she's trained."

Frank said "Trained in my eye" rather sulkily.

He was afraid of the strangers and equally afraid to go too fast himself.

"You won't look at poor cousins with these officers about," he said, real alarm in his voice.

Tirrie had the new whip in her hand and shook her head. She would always remember that Frank had been kind to her and always tried to repay him.

"Promise that," said Frank, his cunning warring with the new feeling which upset him. His big hand closed on Tirrie's. Tirrie shook it with a heartiness which made him sigh. If he had not been so clever he would have told her the truth at once, but the deep cunning in his nature induced him to make a plot and keep to it. He would make Tirrie grateful, win her, and never divulge that he knew she had money.

Six hundred a year—he had carefully reckoned up the accumulations—spelt riches to Frank. There were so many things he could do if he had a little capital. Frank was hard working. Moyvalley was a suitable place for a stud farm. He thought that he would buy two brood mares, good ones. He would build stables, do up the square, ugly house. To do him justice he looked forward to seeing Tirrie happy, with a motor and hunters. But Frank Maguire had never put his feet upon a straight track and gone openly to his goal. Up side ways and by short cuts always moving in secrecy, never confiding in anyone. He carried his methods as far as his hunting, riding hard but always away from other people and hoping to get to the end before them.

So he kept silence and lost an opportunity.

" You're very kind to me, Frank." Tirrie shook his big coarse hand again.

" I'll slip round by the back for my bicycle now," said Frank, quite satisfied. " For fear Florence might see me."

Tirrie ran in with her whip, cracking it vigorously. It was a man's crop. Killone had not stocked a lady's, but Tirrie did not care.

Martin, as he came for dinner, met her in her white dress, the whip in her hand.

" Isn't it lovely, a new whip for to-morrow ? "

Martin saw the T on the silver band, and the sundry dents and scratches due to long years in the shop at Killone.

" Charming," he said rather coldly. " Rather heavy though."

Martin believed it to be one of Tommy's.

Tirrie sat late in her sitting-room, recklessly putting turf on the fire.

To-morrow would be the opening meet and she knew that there would be no foxes. Larry the Hare would no doubt produce one occasionally. Mat O'Donnell sometimes had a bagman, but she did not want these men to go away, and she knew that they would have no sport.

How long would they stand it for? How many weeks go by before they would find out the hopelessness of Kilanour? Perhaps Tommy would keep it on, put down foxes, spend money, but Tirrie was afraid.

She had scarcely seen a glimpse of happiness through her grey life. Rides snatched when Barry was away; tramps across hill or bog with Snap. Ever solitary, always dreading discovery and a scolding; always on the defensive. A brave face hiding a sore young heart. Now, quite suddenly, she found herself of some value. What would Castletown be like when the yard was empty again, its great gate barred, when the amiability forced upon Barry and her mother was no longer necessary, and the old grim dreary round of poverty came once more.

And it's only a fraud, so they must go, thought Tirrie.

She had taken a child's pleasure in her stolen rides, in the lonely fields and woods and in her little garden. She knew now that the poor blossoms she raised, the touch of soft air in her face would not content her, because as she worked or walked she would long for companionship. The doom of woman, enjoying nothing alone, had fallen upon her. Tirrie went to her room to dream uneasily of myriads of foxes, and then of hounds drawing a covert and finding Barry, who went away shrieking, "I'm the only thing you'll get."

The meet was at Castletown gate. The yard outside rang with the hustle of preparation. The young grooms fighting and arguing amicably, hunting for dusters and brushes and sponges. Hanley giving orders from the back door.

Tommy was so nervous that he ate no breakfast. He kept surreptitiously poking at a long mirror to catch his reflection and wondered if it would be a great day or if he would make some stupid mistakes.

"I'll blow the wrong thing on the horn," he burst out nervously. "I'll do something asinine, Bones, I know."

Martin murmured half aloud that he feared there was one note on the horn which they would learn too well. Barty had confided many things to Brown.

" Must learn everything," he said aloud in kindly tones.

At ten forty-five the horses came round. Tommy was riding his English grey and, as a new check rug was swept off her by Hanley, he looked at her proudly.

Hanley's nephew led her, and Tommy thought with vague disappointment that Starlight did not shine any more than the other horses. He even saw a dirty spot on her quarter.

" I mistrusts that one's eye," said Barty ; " she rowls the white at ye till ye'd think of eggs."

Hanley stood back with the air of one who has done marvels. Tommy settled himself and, discovering a brand new saddle, swore softly.

" Ordered two for you to try, Major. The other quite shabby."

Tommy felt the mare with his heel. She stepped away, bending her lean head to a heavy curb, the reins unpleasantly new and slippery. Martin carried a horn also and went ahead with the hounds. In glow of brand new pink they jogged down the avenue. Larry the Hare also in pink, riding by Trevor.

" The greatest mistake ever ye made," he had whispered to Barry, " to put the red on one that must creep an' crawl so as not to be noticed."

The meet was a small one. A few farmers on horses which they wanted to sell. Mat Riley on a raw-boned, whistling, collar-marked chestnut. O'Donnell on his cob. Keefe, whose mare had been laid up with a cut. Grania riding a bay, sent to her to try. Two other ladies. Tirrie had not come to the meet but was waiting in the woods.

Tommy was introduced and welcomed. Every one hoped he might have sport. Miss Birdie McGuffy, who sat crookedly, invited him to be sure to put down a meet at Crageen and they'd promise him a fox.

" An' me foolin' here that fox will have slipped off," said Larry to Barty. " I had to shake him out, now I'm wanted to ride."

Tommy put his hounds into the big woods. They drew languidly or even hopelessly; they were unruly, the younger hounds opening freely on rabbits, one of them hunting a terrified goat. The bagged fox had been brought from the sea this time and had slipped off to take shelter near the lake.

Here Larry viewed him and by capping and encouraging, hounds hunted him slowly across the avenue. But he was a poor-spirited fox, confused and out of his country. He doubled and twisted until old Ruby saw him and threw her tongue so vigorously that she woke the others up. The only really happy person as they scuttled through the bushes was Tommy. He dashed into the ragged undergrowth, he cheered and tooted his horn, and when the poor confused brute was killed as he tried to get into a shallow rabbit hole, Tommy's Who Whoop was magnificent.

He shouted and Trevor shouted, and Larry the Hare said " Great," and a small boy on a donkey was given the brush.

" Sure to be others about," said delighted Tommy to Barry.

Barry said they'd better try, and the Field looked hopeless. They drew every yard of Castletown carefully and then Tommy wished to go to Ardglass. Barry had not let the Kilanour Field go back without some sport. A skilfully laid drag which everyone knew of, though it was never mentioned, often gave them a gallop. The men who had horses to sell expected it now when they jogged away from Castletown, but Larry was riding dutifully near hounds and Barry had not given him any hint.

"We'll run through Kildysart on the way," he said. "A covert just here."

"There hasn't been a fox in Kildysart this ten year," observed Mat Riley. "It is full of hares."

So they jogged to Ardglass, Tommy full of hopes, talking as he went to Grania, who was also full of hope.

"Have you anything settled above," said Mat to Barry, jerking his head towards the patch of gorse on the hill.

Barry replied, chilly, that he had given up the hounds which were out to find foxes.

He was vexed because Martin had called up Keefe and though he was not near enough to listen to them, he guessed from the expression of Keefe's face that a deal had been concluded.

He had replaced the chestnut with a good-looking bay, whose off fore-leg would not stand work.

Ardglass was a tiny gorse. Larry took the south corner and directed the others where to stand.

To every one's surprise hounds opened, but no one but Larry saw a thumping hare fly down to the bog, tucking her long legs under her.

Tommy quivered and cheered his hounds. Two couples dribbled out near Larry, who encouraged them lustily, and Tommy galloped round.

"There is a fox slipped away surely," said Larry. "Blow them out, Major."

Tommy's grey mare had been behaving quite quietly. She raked her bits as he came down the hill, but stopped at a touch.

"There is a good hare gone down to the Sluggera an' as he knows no differ he may as well hunt something," whispered Larry to Barry Maguire.

The older hounds did not speak to it. The younger would hunt anything. To every one's extreme delight they ran down the steep hill and by the serpentine length of the Sluggera bog, where scent failed. The hare had doubled back unseen and Tommy had to prove his mettle.

To Barry's relief he did so by boldly lifting hounds across the road and on to the line which the Ardnataygle fox had taken.

" She doubled back," said a countryman, coming up. " Up the hill with her."

" Put them to me, Bones," shrieked Tommy. " Quick now."

" She was a great hare," said the man. " That's the way, yer honor."

Tommy felt a crisping chill run down his spine. A great hare ! How did one know what hounds were hunting. He blushed unhappily.

" He only saw a hare," comforted Barry. " We were after a fox, Tom Dunne."

" Faix then we were not," said Dunne placidly, " for I seen her cross an' the dogs thrailin' her."

Tommy had some idea that his hounds should be chastised, so he hit Ruby on the nose and flicked his lash at Dragon and Folly. Then he rated Larry who opined firmly that a fox had gone away.

It was only two o'clock, and Tommy began to taste his first disappointment. No one could tell him where to try. There were other coverts, but none of them held foxes. Depression fell upon the new Master. He drew a straggling wood, hounds working listlessly through it, his little Field slipping away one by one. At three o'clock there was nothing to do but jog home.

Tommy was accompanied by Miss Birdie McGuffy, who cheered him up by talking of the two grand runs they had had and begged him to come soon to Crageen.

Tommy fixed the following Monday and wondered why Birdie said dubiously that Monday was a poor day since the Sunday trains were cut off.

The pack was kennelled, the three men failed to respond to Barry's praises of his new horse, or to Juliet and Dahlia's enthusiasm as to the fine foxes Castletown held. They were depressed, and went to their own room, where Brown brought them tea.

" S'pose they've let the foxes get destroyed during the war," grumbled Tommy. " And it'll take two years to get 'em up. Maguire advised Friday on the mountains, altering the meet."

" For it's thick with hares," Barry had said to Larry. " And a Tally is easy to give among all the hollows and humps."

" The widow McGrath says she saw a fox there last Thursday three weeks when she'd been in to get a quart of whisky," said Larry.

" Then she'd drunk it on the way back," said Barry curtly.

Hanley, Tommy's groom, kept the yard busy as he saw to the grey horse. He wanted flaxseed ; the bran-mash was too thick ; he wanted different hay. One boy to rub the grey's ears, two others to dress it. Sam Dooly, as he put a mash before Trevor's horse, was of opinion that it wasn't one man to two horses with that Gus Hanley, but one horse to four min.

" If you're at him like that an' he only exercised, the Major didn't even change to his second, what'll ye do an' he havin' a day ? " inquired Connolly as he left the dun.

" This is a delicate 'oss," said Hanley shortly, and returned to the fire.

But Tommy, when he came out again, was impressed by the bustle and felt sure that he had got a treasure in his man. The grey, Twilight, had shown no symptoms of temper, an occasioned rake at her bits was not running away.

They went over to the East Caras on the Wednesday. People kindly refraining from telling the truth about the Kilanours, but Martin gleaned that all was not well. They had a good day, marked for Tommy by the

English bay standing still half-way up a hill, having exhausted himself by flying all the banks and falling four times.

Friday dawned with swish of rain driven on a north-west gale. The broken shoots roared and spouted. Mary Kate ran about with buckets and basins, putting them down to catch the worst drips. The walls began to sweat moisture. Leaves were swept along in brown disorder and the branches writhed as things in torture.

Old Barty sent up to ask if the hounds would go out. Tommy put his nose to the blurred glass and said " Yes " disconsolately.

It must be an M.F.H.'s duty to proceed to all meets. The wind dropped a little and with its decline the rain grew heavier. Lashing down in grey pitiless ropes, beating the earth, pouring off the roofs.

Hounds came unwillingly. They rode off, sheltered for a mile by the trees, then turning on to a bog road across which the wind raved, driving the rain.

The road wound upwards to peaks blurred by clouds, and there was no one at the meet.

Larry tallied lustily the first time he saw a hare, and they ran slowly on the sheltered side of the hill, until Larry, seeing the hare close in front, marked vigorously where she was not and the hunt was over.

Sleet mixed now with the rain, they were wet through, water running into their boots, and they turned for home without regret, the gale rising again, Tommy pleased because he had had a hunt.

Martin said nothing, for he guesssed what they had hunted. They passed Frank Maguire's place on their way home and he ran out offering drinks.

Tirrie, with her shabby clothes soaked to pulp, looked almost pathetic. She would not drink, but took some hot tea and wondered at Frank's kindness as she stood out in the rain while she drank it.

" No hounds could hunt to-day," he said. " Listen to that." A shrieking gust tore through the trees and a slate spun from the roof.

"You come in, Tirrie," Frank urged. "I'll get you dry clothes and drive you home."

Tirrie shook her head. She jogged on, keeping near Tommy, with the gale all but blowing her off her horse. The grey horse had not behaved well on the mountains. She had rushed and pulled, only stopping because the rough ground frightened her. Tommy's hands were chafed.

The brown bog slid slowly by, and it was almost heaven to gain the shelter of the trees. As they passed, one cracked and bent and fell behind them with a great thudding crash, dragging down a piece of the high wall. The grey mare plunged as she heard it, and suddenly catching her bits in her teeth raced through the hounds and away into the grey wetness.

"Will she know the gate well enough to boult into it," said Larry, peering into the rain. "Follyin' her on would only aggryvate her anyways," he finished placidly.

They found Tommy at the swing gate which the grey mare had smashed to pieces. He was sitting on the ground in a pool of water, looking dazed.

"Hang brute, never rose," he said irritably.

Tommy was much too wet and cross to listen to Hanley, who came out with an umbrella up—as that pearl among grooms declared his readiness to bit the mare so that she would run away no more. Sir Martin was quite wrong about her.

"If she swhallys her bits it is good-night," said Barty. "An' I to see her do it with the bye yesterday."

They will never stay, Tirrie thought as she pulled off her soaked rags, they were little more now. They must get disgusted. Mary Kate had made up a splendid fire. She produced eggs and crisp bacon and honey for her wet baby. And Tirrie with the delighted sense of rest and peace which prolonged exposure brings, sat growing warm, and instead of troubling, began to build castles in the air.

Each castle contained many hunters, and the woods were full of foxes. Tirrie never dreamt of jewels or fine frocks. She started as Martin came in, carrying a cardboard box and a letter.

"There are your figures," he said, tossing over a cheque.

"Six—sixty—sixty pounds," gasped Tirrie. "For those things."

"Less five for a habit," said Martin, who had written to his sister to send a new one of her own.

Tirrie let her tea grow cold. She had never had more than sixpence in her life.

"I can give Mary Kate a new dress," she said, "and Mary Kateen a new hat, and Barty riding breeches now, and——"

Martin's smile was almost sad. Money to him had never meant buying things for other people. He took a cup of tea and a hunk of hot bread, thickly smeared with honey, biting into it with leisurely enjoyment.

"Beats caviare sandwiches," he said, smiling. "If I were you, Tirrie, I'd—just keep it all quiet. Say nothing and lock up the money. I'll cash the cheque for you."

"If I could get into Cara and buy a new dress for myself," Tirrie cried.

The wind eddied and roared outside, and down the wide chimney; the old house trembled.

Martin lay back in a big chair, the same half-sad smile on his face. He had more money than he wanted, and scarcely realized this poverty.

In her excitement Tirrie told of the innermost things in her life. Of her mother's dislike, of the papers she signed; of their debts, of many things.

"Your father had money then?" Martin asked.

"Mary Kate says that he had and meant to leave it to me. He chose my name. He was dying then. Mary Kate has told me." Tirrie spoke dreamily of how his last words were something about—"All for Tiranogue." "But it went to mother. She spent it on Barry, I expect."

Sir Martin murmured "I wonder" to the glowing fire.

"I used not to mind being always alone." Tirrie's mouth trembled a little. "But now you have been so kind. It—it will be so different when you all go."

"Why—when," Martin asked.

"Because of course you are sure to," Tirrie said simply.

CHAPTER XII

MARTIN FITZ HUGHES had never practised the arts of subtlety. A certain quickness of perception hidden beneath his lazy manner, had allowed him to see things hidden from denser minds. But, as he walked away from Tirrie's sitting-room, he was deep in thought. Piecing ill-fitting fragments together, trying to make sentences of the jumbled words in his mind. He turned down the back stairs to the big kitchen with its scrubbed white table and glowing coppers, and its flotsam and jetsam of rubbish.

Old Mary Kate was alone, plucking chickens for dinner. Martin watched the deft fingers hailing the feathers down. He leant against the table, apparently a man in idle mood. Ostensibly he came to ask how Hanley fitted in.

Mary Kate was pleased by the attention. " Gus Hanley," she said, " could never be pleased, so it was no use trying. One to wait on him he wants," she went on. " Toasted bread an' bacon for his brekkust, an' sheep chops for his dinner. The sooner the Major finds him out the better," declared Mary Kate stoutly.

Martin agreed. Then he talked of old days, and the Maguires of a bygone age, Mary Kate leaping to it as a hungry trout to a fly. She reeled off stories of coaches and horses, of folly and recklessness. Of Maguires who had gambled in the rooms upstairs, of Maguires who had borrowed money to build on to the huge house.

" The money dwindlin' with each that come in for it, an' each one throwin' what was left out for fear he'd look a mayner man than his father," she said sagely.

" Had not little Miss Tirrie's father money, and weren't they rich again when he died ? "

Mary Kate laid down the chicken.

" They were not," she said slowly. " But poorer. There was little left then. An' the missus always sot agin the little one up there. Always as if the baby had done her a wrong. I tended the child, kep her cradle below here, me own Mary Kate being but a year old. Mrs. Maguire'd not see Miss Tirrie if she could help it."

Martin smoked on in silence. He was piecing his jumble.

" It might be," Mary Kate looked round, " I'm always prayin' for it, that the missus only draws it by the year an' that the bit itself comes to the child an' she gone. An' the missus wants so much for Mister Barry. She'd never forgive that."

Martin thought that the problem was working out. He stayed a little longer, gave Mary Kate a sovereign to buy herself something and strolled away, wondering why a half-wild child should interest him so much.

Tirrie stayed alone, bathed in gold. The rain outside was music, the wind a song of triumph. She had money of her own. She spent it ten times over. On a new saddle, on Sweetheart, bought from Tommy ; on so many things. Tirrie wandered round her big shabby room, wondering if fresh fortunes were concealed in the little delicate figures ; the old boxes ; the branching candlesticks.

Her face glowed so that old Mary Kate coming to take the tray looked at her shrewdly, not dreaming that it was prosperity which had caused shining eyes and pink cheeks.

" Miss Tirrie astore," she said tenderly. " I'd never stay after you."

With this wholly irrelevant remark Mary Kate took up the rusty tray which was covered with a darned cloth.

" The missus is in one of her tanthrums," she said. " Blazin' around becos she found a hole in Mister Barry's top boots. An' Shaun Cregan, the creature is ruined on the head of thim same, an' the saddlery."

Shaun Cregan was bootmaker and saddler.

"Mister Barry owes him a sight of money," said Mary Kate. "Shaun towlt me last Sunday that if he cannot get a few pounds he will be sowlt up before Christmas comes. He trusted Mister Barry to pay him a trifle an' let the account run these fifteen years."

Shaun Cregan was a poor shambling little creature with a sickly wife and ten children. His eldest son had been killed in France, leaving Shaun to carry on alone until Larry the second came home to help. He was in Mespot.

Tirrie collapsed as a chilled omelette. She shivered.

Poor little Shaun, who had often patched up her boots and shoes and her bridle and saddle, and always so willingly.

"Sold up before Christmas," repeating this Tirrie went to her room to step into the habit, which hung loosely but was too well cut to show it. A coat, breeches, a waistcoat, but Tirrie laughed. Her broken brown boots and bandage puttees must finish it off and she wondered a little grimly what Martin would think.

Florence Maguire was raging in her own room, rage which bit deeply because it had to be controlled, it could not storm through the house lashing every one with bitter words.

Barry wanted things, the little sum for the stables had melted as hoar frost before the sun. The profit on forage was as nothing. The weekly payments, contrive as she would, had to be spent. Castletown had ceased to be a house of plenty with its own eggs and poultry, fruit, and vegetables. These strangers had to be fed. The old days of hard bargaining with the country people were no more. They brought up baskets of eggs, but the poultry store in Killone gave so much a pound and she must give the same. Hens had been purchased, but

Florence Maguire would not pay the price required for young ones, and they refused to lay. Mary Kate could no longer contrive with leaking saucepans and worn frying-pans.

" Buying all day with the money I thought I could save." The hard-faced woman raged up and down her bare room, her anger circling and ev[illegible] coming to one object, Tirrie.

A few hundreds now when these men opened society to the Maguires and he could cut his dash and marry his heiress. He was sulkily willing, but the two Hallorans had always drawn back, afraid of so much poverty.

" No one would heed stories if we could show ourselves now." A sudden flash illuminated Florence Maguire's face. She opened her door and called Tirrie loudly.

Tirrie came, shrinking. She never entered her mother's presence without lurking fear.

" Tirrie, will you write a letter for me ? " Her mother was civil, even smiling. " To the cake shop in Cara. They have forgotten an order. Just—Please send me what I require. Sign your own name."

Tirrie wrote obediently. She was afraid that in some way her mother would see into her mind, find out her burst of fortune.

" Address it now." Mrs. Maguire gave Tirrie an envelope. She meant to take the letter out and with it try her fortune with Mat Kelly. He could not refuse to obey it. She laughed, without the slightest thought of pity or compunction for the child whom she was robbing.

" You wouldn't care to come to dinner, Tirrie ? " she said, still kindly. " Dahlia might lend you a blouse."

" No thank you, Mother." Tirrie slipped away thinking deeply. Kindness from other people touched her, her mother's made her afraid. She knew that very little persuasion would induce her to sign more mysterious papers and wondered why it was not used.

The great storm battered the world for three days, keeping them all prisoners in the house, and Tommy took his hounds out on the Monday through a twig-strewn, branch-littered world. The lowering clouds had rolled away and a warm sun shone in a clear blue sky.

Barry was unenthusiastic as to a meet at Crageen, but he came with them in his new coat, riding a fine young horse which he had swopped two cows for. A big up-standing brown with a great deal of spurious quality, but with bad shoulders and a light middle.

Tommy rode his bay for the first time, the grey out second. He was full of optimism as they jogged through the still rain-washed morning. They would have a great hunt. Hounds would hunt splendidly. He saw possibilities in the hilly country, he felt absolutely happy.

Quite a large field had mustered at Crageen. Grania Duff came in a big motor driven by Herbert. Mat O'Donnell was on the enduring cob. Two of the West Cara men had come over. A muster of young farmers surged or revolved on unclipped animals of varying ages, thumping the thick coats of their mounts when they kicked or plunged.

Tommy's optimism rose higher. He felt that he must have a good day.

Miss Birdie McGuffy, in a very tight bottle-green habit, crowned by a pot hat several sizes too small for her method of hair dressing, came down the short avenue to greet them with curious nervousness.

The little single line to Killone ran close to the gates and she peered at it anxiously.

Then she asked them in to breakfast and would not take a refusal. So at eleven o'clock they gave their horses to men to hold and swarmed into a small dining-room, an immense fire piled in the grate and all the windows shut.

Birdie's mother, wearing a jetted bonnet, sat at the head of the table behind a dozen syphons of soda and a quart bottle of whisky. The table was sprinkled with highly coloured sweets and dishes of apples and pears. Tommy murmured something concerning tea and running off, then quailed before Mrs. McGuffy's glance as she boomed out, in a voice which sounded like a fog horn, that men were gone to the dogs. She then pushed forward the whisky.

" The dogs," she repeated. " Mr. McGuffy that was a Man, could put away his pint before twelve and ride a hunt afterwards. *He* could."

Mat O'Donnell confided to Martin that Tom McGuffy had eventually ridden into a quarry at twelve-thirty and there died.

" What are ye whisperin' for, Mat O'Donnell ? " boomed Mrs. McGuffy. " He broke his neck with his bold riding and there's not one here could say that."

This statement was not to be contradicted. Birdie murmured, " Easy, Mamma," her eyes on the clock.

" The new Master will take a bite anyhow in the house of a man that rode like none else," said the hostess firmly. " Bridgie, bring the breakfast."

There was no escape. Breakfast came slowly, starting with four plump geese, smoking hot, goldenly browned, with baked potatoes round them. There was a light side dish of pigs' heads, also hot, with cabbage. Mrs. McGuffy and Barry carved. With the brilliant day mocking them outside they were all faced by heaped plates of goose or bacon, and brimming glasses of whisky and soda.

When Tommy faltered Mrs. McGuffy told him he would never hunt hounds.

He ate goose and tried to move off, his head swimming from heat and whisky, to be checked by Birdie, and breakfast moved slowly to chops and pork cutlets.

" You have a great cook," said Mat O'Donnell, taking a second helping of goose.

Mrs. McGuffy replied grimly that she was used to the best of everything especially men that were Men.

" God help us, Major, what'll feed your nerves, looking at your goose as if it was a spring trap," she burst out. " Give the Major a chop, Birdie, he has no wish for goose, and fill his glass. I'll give no huntsman tea," she added firmly.

It was twelve o'clock and the sit-down meal progressed to puddings and tarts and a tray of tea, and they were still pressed to eat. A whistle sounding outside caused Birdie to exclaim, " God be praised," and to lose her worried look.

" Now ye'll ride," said Mrs. McGuffy, eyeing the flushed and perspiring company. " Chickens for childer, but men want brown meat." Birdie called to Barry. The desire to keep them eating ended suddenly.

Overfed and irritable, Tommy almost reeled into the clear air outside gulping it greedily into his lungs.

No one had been forgotten. Barty and Larry were finishing jam tarts ; the farmers' faces were flushed. Even the hounds had been provided with loaves of bread.

" There is plenty at Crageen," said Mrs. McGuffy, following them out. She was lean but ponderous.

Then darkly she informed Tommy that small horses were no use to real men.

" Barry Maguire has what's what ? " she remarked, pointing to the large youngster.

" Mr. McGuffy rode to his end on a seventeen-hand hunter," she said proudly. " And what he'd have was the sort. There was no tea please in the mornings for him I tell you."

" If you put the hounds into the little wood down there," said Birdie, waving her whip towards a thinly planted larch spinney. " He'll be—he lies there."

A very large youth carrying a basket lumbered into sight near the woods and made leisurely way towards the yard.

With his morning's good humour gone, Tommy took on his hounds. There was no undergrowth and no covert, but as hounds dribbled in a small fox fled in terror looking about it in dazed fashion.

Lost and bewildered it ran to the laurels near the house, from there back to the wood, and pressed more by the enthusiastic Field than the hounds, kept them going for half an hour until it found sanctuary in a large drain.

Even Tommy knew that it was a bagman. Fear of giving offence keeping him from stopping hounds.

He looked into the wide mouth of the drain and back at Birdie, who was smiling ecstatically.

" You didn't come all the ways for nothing," she said happily.

" You were waiting for the train," said Martin lazily.

" The very thing I was," returned Birdie heartily. " And breakfast put the time down grand. It is near two now."

They moved off glumly to try some patches of gorse and a big wood vainly.

No one seemed to mind. A young farmer led them a school over trappy banks, declaring when they got to a tiny lump of gorse that it was as good as a hunt. Barry muttered to Larry and Larry shook his head.

" I could get the drag handy, but in God's name how could I run it," he said irritably. " With a red coat on me like a baycon."

The day ended drearily. They jogged back to Castletown Maguire in glum silence.

Tirrie's eyes filled with tears. She had known what must happen. No one could stay in their country. Barry had run drags openly. One could not suggest them to this new master.

Tommy recovered a little when Grania Duff rode up to him. He could grumble to her.

"I'm afraid from what I hear it has always been poor," she said. "And I am going away. I've persuaded dad. We have an old house in Cahervalley. Of course you'll get up foxes here."

Tommy was of grim opinion that he would not.

"When one only has a year or two," he said bitterly. "It's no use spending one's all for nothing."

Grania's face grew shadowed. "I—thought you were one of the rich ones," she said slowly.

"Then I'm not," Tommy poured out his story, and Miss Duff laughed quite immoderately.

"I'm no use to anyone you see," said Tommy gruffly. "But I did think I'd get some fun." Then he grew optimistic again. They hadn't tried all the country. Mat O'Donnell swore he had foxes. They'd go there on Monday. Then Ardglass again, and Castletown. He'd carry on.

Grania pulled back her horse and Tommy called to Tirrie. She came up, fine in her new habit with the bandages on her legs in lieu of high boots.

Fear of losing them drove away honest confession. She said haltingly that they might find foxes, might have better sport. Depression made Tommy confidential. He stopped talking of hunting, and began to tell Tirrie what a miserable thing a man was who could never afford to ask a girl to marry him.

They rode on together, the girl's head turned towards Tirrie, their voices lowered, Martin watching them.

"It would be—so very suitable," said Miss Duff to him, in a toneless voice. "Oh—how I hate suitability," she burst out, wheeling in her own gate.

Martin murmured "Dear me," and rode on in silence.

Tirrie had forgotten her new habit as she rode into and met her mother. She was greeted by a storm of angry questions. Where had it come from? Whose was it? A nice thing that Barry should go shabby while his sister flaunted in fine clothes.

"Sir Martin got it for me from his sister. I suppose they were ashamed to see such a scarecrow out with the hounds," Tirrie said coldly.

A tirade then on brazen girls who took presents from men, and Tirrie escaped.

Martin had brought her her money. The notes were folded up and hidden, Tirrie taking them out at times to look at them with wondering delight. She had paid him his five pounds and they were to go to Cara to spend some of her fortune. But he did not come to her to have tea. It was Tommy, depressed and weary, who found his way, sitting talking for an hour. Tommy never looked at the pictures or china, he munched toast and talked of himself.

"Did you hear there's to be a dance," he said. "At the Court House, in Killone. A subscription affair for the session times. You'll come?"

Tirrie was all aglow. Tommy promised to ask for permission for her. She knew she could afford to buy a dress. At this moment Frank Maguire came up by the back way and looked coldly at Tommy.

"Came to ask you over to-morrow," he said, "for luncheon."

Tirrie was vague because she did not know when Martin would provide a motor and take her to shop. Frank stayed for a little, stroking his heavy red chin, and feeling ill-pleased. He must go faster if these men paid attention to Tiranogue. Must bring more gifts, earn her gratitude.

He pressed her to come over, asked her to stay. Then finding Tirrie did not respond, he grew gloomy. Frank wanted money, but something which he hardly recognized had been touched in him. He was sorry for the little pale girl and angry now because of the new light in her eyes.

She told him of her interview with her mother. Youth loves to give its confidences, Frank stroking his big long chin and listening gravely.

" I wonder what devilment she was up to," he thought. Here again his cunning defeated his own purpose. He was afraid to say too much lest Tirrie might suspect, when the very shock of the surprise might have made her something more than his friend for ever.

" Why do you think she's given up asking me," Tirrie asked, and Frank Maguire quibbled with the question.

" Maybe it was all nothing. That they abandoned the law case." He again pressed Tirrie to come over to them to stay. He was buying a little car, he would teach her to drive. In his clumsy way he meant to make her happy with her own money.

Tirrie gave a vague promise. She would come on Saturday if she could.

Frank slipped away. He dreaded Florence Maguire.

November forgot her passion next morning, smiling softly, her coldness painted with elusive fire of sunlight. Behind her chill treacherous smile she thought of a night's crisp frost, though her day's dress was that of summer. Florence Maguire went out early, riding her rusty bicycle along the greasy roads. The track of the storm littered them. Broken branches, gapped walls, turf stacks blown over. Great hayricks leaning drunkenly. She found Mat Riley wrapped in a great coat shivering, and in ill-humour.

" You'll catch your death coming to the office," she said sharply " When you haven't two clients a week. And I want three hundred of Tirrie's. You can't go against that, Mat."

She tossed Tirrie's letter to him. It was enclosed in a new envelope and addressed in a passable imitation of Tirrie's writing to M. Kelly, Esqr.

" She doesn't say the sum." He read the letter, turning it about as if to look for some hidden message.

" Then I say it. Three hundred pounds. And little enough for all we want."

If it had not been for another three hundred which he could not account for, Matthew Riley would have refused absolutely. As it was he looked miserable.

" I have the bronchitis on me," he said. " And if I die there'll be a nice disgrace on me mother, Florence, with all this." Mrs. Maguire returned unsympathetically that all Kelly's lived until they were ninety.

" I'll come over and see Tirrie," he raged weakly. " I'll tell her, die or live, Florence. This is the last. It'll take time to sell out this."

" You know quite well you have it all on deposit," she said crisply.

But while she gambled her hands were wet. She was afraid a day of reckoning must come.

Then smoothing her hard face she coaxed him, flattered and advised, with the wide flashing smile which she had always found useful. If Mat had not had a high temperature and a wheeze on his chest, he might have melted. As it was he grunted crossly, and looked at her hard, almost ready to ask where his commission was to come from. He wanted to go home and go to bed, and one of Barry's mythical outsiders might have induced him to put off the evil hour of telling Tiranogue. But Florence Maguire wanted too much. She had no breadth of outlook. The mental spyhole through which she looked out at life was labelled Barry. This money was to marry Barry and she wanted it all. With it she would get a little car or hire one, ask over the Hallorans and try to make the match.

" I'll get you this, Florence." Riley's feverish eyes narrowed. " But it's my time to tell the girl, and I will by heavens."

" And when you do you'll go off the rolls," was what Florence began to say but checked herself, and she coaxed again instead. She carried the wheezing man to the bank, her heart beating when at last she fingered the notes. Then came another hitch. Receipts so far had been easy things. Mat demanded one, and Tirrie would no longer put her name blindly to the paper. But Florence trusted to her luck. This fraud which she had perpetrated was to her mind merely that. She rode away, the money tucked away into her shabby bag, leaving Riley wheezing and shivering.

The man's illness made him nervous. He had kept the note and looked at its curious wording. Then he went to his dirty doorsteps and saw Frank Maguire riding down the street.

" Hi Frank," he wheezed.

Frank said, " You're hatching a cold, Mat," sympathetically.

Mr. Riley returned glumly that his cold had its tail feathers on and stared thoughtfully at Frank.

" See Tirrie often ? " he said. " Ask her if she sent me a letter to-day. Don't forget. I'm going home to bed. When a man is breathing like a corn crake——" Here he wheezed harshly.

" I'll ask her," said Frank. If he had known nothing he would have questioned Mat, but his cunning held him back. " Tirrie's not a great letter-writer," he said as he rode on.

Tirrie, blissfully unaware of the havoc of her fortune, had run out happily into the fair morning. She almost danced through the big yard. All the things she wanted so badly could now be hers. A pair of top boots, a saddle, presents for her friends. The saddle could be purchased at Killone. She had seen one, second-hand, at Shaun Cregan's. Tirrie put on a hat and her patched shoes and set off to walk to Killone. By taking short cuts across the hills she could get there in a little over an hour. As she ran, Snap at her heels, down the long rutted avenue she came on Juliet and Herbert Duff seated on an old stump which was too small to hold two people comfortably.

Juliet got up looking flushed and Tirrie smiled to herself. When climbing a narrow path overlooking the road she saw her mother riding her bicycle to Castletown, a look of triumph in her face.

The sunshine of the morning seemed to get into Tirrie's heart. She did not know why she felt so happy. As she walked on she wove romances for other people and sometimes very shyly for herself, but always with some person or persons unknown.

Shaun's shop was in the broad street. A few straps, a boot, and the saddle she coveted showed his trade. Shaun himself was stitching at a pair of traces, deep lines of care graven on his small face.

"Shaun, I've come for that saddle."

Shaun Cregan's expression was that of a man who hates to hurt something which he likes.

"I'm sorry, Miss Tirrie, but—it's sowlt," he said awkwardly.

"It's gone." Then seeing her lip tremble—she had pulled it down and was fingering the scarcely soiled leather—"The truth is, Miss, I cannot. I cannot give ye another thing. Sure ye don't understand, but Mister Barry has me ruinated. I'll be sowlt up for what I gave him. The wife an' the children, an' I alone till Larry comes from the Army, an' Tom gone." He dropped his head to hide tears.

"Things are too dear for me to buy to start again," he whispered. "I'll be sowlt up by Shannahans in Cara for fifty pound. I was here always, Miss. An' I think me heart'll tear when I goes."

"I have the money to buy the saddle, Shaun." Tirrie felt something hurt her throat. He was so desolate sitting there, the sob of a sickly child rising in the kitchen.

"I was here always, Miss, an' I think me heart'll tear when I go." He had often put aside urgent work to stitch her stirrup leather or stuff her rotting saddle. Since Tirrie was a child she could remember their driving up to Cregan's to order horse rugs and straps and harness. She had ridden in with urgent messages.

"I had to pay out for the things Mr. Barry wanted, or rather I owes for them," he said in his dreary voice. "But maybe he hasn't it."

Florence Maguire with three hundred pounds in her bag had bicycled past Cregan's door, knowing the man was ruined, but she had not dreamt of sparing him even a little.

Tirrie stood very still. If—if—— All her dreams would vanish, but old Cregan would work on in his shop until Larry came home to help.

"Larry is a great worker an' whin he comes I'd be made," Cregan said. "But he is signed on for another year, gettin' good pay beyant. He wrote to say we'd take in Maloney's then."

A wad of notes were tucked inside Tirrie's dress. She had never had any money of her own and her new joy would be wiped away, but——" The baby's cry rose again. Old Shaun stitched on. Tirrie leant across the counter.

If he would never tell anyone—she had sold something. She would pay enough to keep them going. Her voice came in short jerks. She was afraid she might run away into the sunshine to all she had dreamt of.

"Ten, thirty, fifty." Notes flat and soft were laid on the counter. "Fifty-five. I must keep—just a little, Shaun."

"In the name of God, Miss Tirrie, did ye steal it?" was what Shaun said, his mouth slack.

Tirrie's sacrifice hissed and cooled beneath this chill. She gulped back tears and laughed shakily.

"Sthole or not. God in heaven above." Old Shaun searched for the poetical flowery Irish blessings and instead he cried, quite openly, the tears falling on the brown traces.

"It is just as if I was drowned an' suddint like I was put aboard of a big liner," he said unsteadily.

He promised secrecy with a clear belief that the money was not honestly come by. Otherwise why should there be silence. And he gave Tirrie the saddle. He would carry it out himself with Bessheen, the jennet, and give it to her own hands.

" Not one penny would he take for it, then, anyways."

Tirrie walked out of the shop with leaden feet, and yet in years to come she realized that she would never know so curious a happiness. She felt dazed as she went up the wide street to buy presents. Dwarfed presents instead of the dresses and blouses she had thought of. She went to the old shop, wondering why Talty looked at her hardly and took up her money with a complete change of expression.

" It's more than your mother'd do, Miss Tirrie," he said gruffly. " I'll send the parcel to Cregan's as he's goin' out."

Tirrie faced the walk home in weary mood. Her feet no longer danced and yet she was glad. Frank Maguire trotted up to her on the road.

" Tirrie, were you at Riley's to-day ? " he asked.

Tirrie shook her head.

" I thought about that letter you wrote him." Even here Frank Maguire could not ask a question openly.

" Oh no," said Tirrie, hardly listening. This left the matter in doubt. Tirrie might or might not have written the letter to Riley, and Frank was afraid to ask her.

" He said something about a letter," he muttered.

To which Tirrie replied that if she had not learnt to write she would never have been bothered to sign her name, and with a wave of her hand scrambled over the road fence and ran off a narrow path winding above a bog. Frank Maguire watched her go, with a wistfulness which was quite foreign to him.

He rode back to his shabby old-fashioned house, to stand for a time in the damp unoccupied drawing-room, and decided that Tirrie should refurnish it, Frank's taste leaning towards a suite gaily upholstered in green which he had seen in a shop in Cara. This, dotted neatly over a red carpet, would he felt sure, look cheerful. As he sat down to a belated midday meal of boiled beef, he thought with vague discomfort that Tirrie would want light luncheons of cutlets or chickens and sweets trickled over with flabby, whipped cream, such as he had partaken of in Mrs. Hallorans, which was a house of pretension.

Tirrie's little presents arrived before her. She missed the great glow of giving because she had planned to give so largely. Then she wandered out. A year before she would have dug in her garden, saved seeds from her straggling plants, or taken off cuttings to live in the attic window, but flowers had lost interest.

"To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow," was the cry echoing in Tirrie's mind. What was she going to do when the strangers left and the drab road of her life stretched out, spread with thorns, before her weary feet ? No one would be kind to her then.

She sat in a sunny corner staring at nothing. Frank Maguire might ask her to go to his house, but Tirrie shook her head. It was as sordid there, not so much poverty, but the endless routine of farming for a living. Interest centring in the weight of bullocks, the calving of cows ; the price of young pigs, or the endless question of hay, oats, wheat, and roots.

The girl knew that somewhere beyond the little country there was a land where people lived and had enough to live on. Broad streets, shops holding dazzling things, flashing lights, wide seas. And while she would not have bartered a good horse for all these dimly dreamt-of joys, she wanted to see them, to have her horses, but things apart from the little wheel which she could see her youth broken on.

Tommy, talking to Hanley, appeared at the gate of the yard. Hanley's demands were so large that careless Tommy was getting frightened. Bales of straw and hay and barrels of oats had to be carted almost daily from Killone, Larry the Hare's parent waxing opulent upon the sums he charged for hauling.

His horses were not looking well. The grey mare was coughing, and the chestnut's leg had filled. Their doors were carefully shut all day, they were coddled and dosed but they did not thrive.

At the present moment Tommy was looking ruefully at the forage merchant's bill.

" Must buy here. This man's prices are nearly double," he said gruffly.

Hanley expostulated courteously. He was willing to do his best on bad stuff, but the Major could see for himself how the horses were suffering now from the inferior feeding they had been on. And he made Tommy believe him. He saw Tirrie leaving Hanley to walk across to him.

" Seems to me that horses eat gold," said Tommy glumly. " Gold, Tirrie. An' gold, gold's the worst thing in the world to want," he burst out.

Then after a pause he came round to the subject which made his lack of gold hurt him. He'd like to go to Castle Crehan next day to see if foxes could be put down. Would Tirrie come to show him the main earth ?

Tirrie smiled softly. She knew what this meant. Yes, she would come. They sat on until they grew cold and then went into the house, meeting Martin in the hall. Tommy went away to sign cheques.

" I've got a car for to-morrow," said Martin, " and I'll drive you to Cara."

Tirrie remembered that she had no money. Her effort of self-control made her voice cold.

" I'm sorry. I'm not going," she said. " I've arranged to take Major Blackburn to see an earth."

" The next day."

" I—I—am not going to Cara," said Tirrie, running up the stairs.

Sir Martin looked after her and went into the sitting-room, banging the door expressively.

"You—Hang it, Martin. You've made me put another O to fifty pounds," snapped Tommy.

"Make you see sense the sooner when it's cashed," returned Martin unsympathetically.

CHAPTER XIII

"O'DONNELLS on Friday," said Tommy. "And after that——" he whistled expressively.

"After that we might go somewhere to hunt," Martin murmured. They were getting weary of long days on mountains looking for foxes which they never found. The Duffs were leaving in a fortnight. Grania was waiting for the dance in the Town Hall, quite a great affair for Killone.

Mrs. Maguire was using her new money for her son. She had asked the Halloran girls to lunch and had dazzled them by a lunch purchased in Cara. She had spoken lightly of prosperity and a new motor-car.

Miss Kate Halloran had a great deal of money and a level head. She had always drawn back from any intimacy with the Maguires because she told her sister she did not see her way to being the only support of a family. But she wanted to marry, and Florence Maguire perceived a new amiability which delighted her.

Barry looked on sulkily, aware that he was being arranged for, but he said nothing.

Kate was hard-featured and coarse-looking. He inclined to Moira who was fat and inert, but she was spoken of with one of O'Donnell's nephews, a youth fifteen years younger than she was.

Florence Maguire rode on a wave of hope and did not notice that the hunting was hopeless. She had grown used to tales of bad days.

Juliet and Dahlia were allowed to purchase new ball dresses. Mrs. Maguire had some idea that one of the men must be attentive, as Juliet was out so much and came in so flushed and happy looking.

No one talked of anything but the ball. Martin had got his car over, and the Duffs had offered to take the girls, so Mrs. Maguire was hiring a car herself and sending Barry to fetch the Hallorans. Tirrie had been given a ticket. Frank Maguire had purchased it, but she had no dress to go in.

A timid plea to her mother was met by a hard refusal. Little girls were best at home.

She had sat alone in her room for some time. Martin stayed downstairs, but he came in one night and took tea. She was of course going to the ball.

Tirrie was tremulous. "Cinderella," she said. She looked into the fire, winking back tears.

"Why not buy a dress ?" Martin looked expressively at a piece of china. "Then the pumpkin coach might come."

One tear fell and Tirrie did not know that he had seen it. He went away dissatisfied, leaving a forlorn little figure huddled close to some turf ashes.

"Cinderella," sniffed Tirrie to herself. "No pumpkin, no godmother, but Mat O'Donnell will have a fox to-morrow."

Mat O'Donnell's house was ten miles away. Tommy's optimism had died down now when he went out. He no longer felt the glory of hunting hounds where there was nothing to hunt. He jogged in his spick and span pink, the grey mare over her cough, and in evil humour from no work. The hounds had grown fat, too fat really. Tommy dreamt, as he rode, of the country full of foxes, as it might be if he could stay on to put them down. People turned up, coming out undeterred by lack of sport. Mat O'Donnell rolled down his steps proffering drinks and cake, with a whack of cold beef inside for those who'd like it. And he had a fox. His not one out of a bag, but he's using the place, babbled Mat. "I tell you we'll have a hunt."

While hungry people were feeding Barry noticed a stranger, a slim red-haired youth, riding a half-clipped cob. This youth edged up to him, looking at the youngster Barry rode. "Nice horse," he said softly.

Barry wondered who he was.

"Want to sell?" queried the youth.

"I want to sell him if you want a horse," said Barry. The youth got off and examined the horse carefully. He asked the price and whistlsd expressively.

"Your own or someone else's?" he asked carelessly. "I'll ask the other fellow to come down in price if it's not yours."

Barry thought the boy's manner strange and grunted.

"Naturally mine," he said shortly.

"Sixty pounds," said the youth. "He's value for fifty, got a curb. But I want a horse. Can I get up and try him?"

Barry got off. The boy changed the saddles, remarking that Barry used plain flaps and he liked knee rolls. Then he got up and cantered the brown round the lawn. He came back and took his pony's reins.

"Quiet to lead off?" he asked, edging away; the breakfasters were strolling out.

"Yes," growled Barry.

"Then I'm McGill's nephew and I take him for Slattery's debt," said the boy, trotting off. "You never have anything of your own when my uncle comes round. Nothing but potatoes, Mr. Maguire."

Barry was stricken as with a paralytic seizure. He mouthed, flung out his hands, lost his head and ran half way down the avenue before he thought of returning to borrow a horse to pursue, babbling of what had happened.

"That was a dam smart trick," said Mat O'Donnell admiringly. "No, I won't give you the cob, Barry, you'd hammer the legs off him and that McGill is a bad customer to cross. Don't lend him a horse, Major. Assault won't mend it."

This as Barry lurched towards Tommy.

When Barry cooled he stared down the avenue, reluctant approval in his eyes. Every Irishman secretly admires the man who gets the better of him. Swearing vengeance, Barry accepted the loan of a jady mare of O'Donnell's, a lean, battered-looking beast, collar and trace-marked.

The loss of the brown's price tried Barry sorely. If ever he should catch the bailiff again in his yard.

"If McGill ever gets in again Barry'll stuff every potato with tintacks," said O'Donnell hopefully.

They went off to draw a long straggling wood, hounds opening at once, to the complete ecstasy of Mat O'Donnell, who wobbled in his saddle until his overladen cob grunted. With a burst of music which went to Tommy's brain as wine, the pack went through the wood and next minute a clamour of tongues announced that Mat O'Donnell had neglected his stopping.

"He's so completely surprised to see a fox he never thought of the holes," said Barry sourly, hitting the jady mare.

Barry was closely attended by Miss McGuffy, radiantly crooked on a chestnut carriage horse.

"If it takes all the spades in the garden he shall give us a run yet," yelped O'Donnell. "Carty, Mike, Andy, get every waypon you possess an' be at him."

As if by magic, spades, forks, and even a pickaxe were produced, Tommy being directed to draw off his hounds as the earth was flung out vigorously.

"Catch him and we'll enlarge him in the yellow meadows," commanded O'Donnell.

At this Carty backed nervously, announcing that the "vilyin's teeth were bared ready for the snhap, and that he had heard tell a fox's bite would give a man the rabbids."

The seeds of fear once sown, no one would put their hands in, until O'Donnell himself, bitterly condemning all cowards, got off ponderously, sent for a sack and flattened the heaped-up earth as he lay down. With complete dexterity he grabbed and brought up a furious fox which he stuffed into a small sack. The Field swayed in its excitement. They would have a hunt. They must, for in the yellow meadows a fox must run somewhere.

Hardress wanted to take the fox to enlarge it, others offered, but the big man clung to the sack.

"Wanting every inch of start I can get," he said. "I'll drop him myself, boys."

They moved off. Tommy's grin had grimness behind it. He was tired of Kilanour. O'Donnell rode ahead, carefully carrying the fox, settling the bag over his monstrous shoulders and holding it by the end. So they made their way out of the woods and into flat, boggy pastures, fenced with small, open ditches.

Mat O'Donnell's cob could jump even with sixteen stone on its back, and Mat was brave as a lion. He was really longing for a hunt. He had a shrewd suspicion that this fox had come down from Kilgra Hill, a jutting peak two miles away, and that he might return there.

But as they went across the third grass field a wild yell rent the air. The fox, worming its head through a hole, had managed to meet its teeth in its captor, and in a tender spot.

At the sudden pain O'Donnell's spurs went convulsively into his cob, and that long suffering animal, hurt in its turn, bucked furiously, sending Mat over his head. He fell with a roar and a thud, staggering to his feet, cursing but triumphant, for he had gallantly held on to the bag.

"He met his teeth in me," he groaned, rubbing himself anxiously.

"The trousers will have wiped away the venom," comforted Larry.

To this Mr. O'Donnell replied bitterly that it was not venom was troubling him.

"It would be an awkward thing to die mad. Maybe marauding for chickens," said Larry. "Are ye hurt, Sir?"

Mat O'Donnell's reply was convincing if not polite. He wished to know if people were generally hurt when seriously torn by teeth and made glumly for his cob, which eyed him nervously.

Getting up, still clasping this fox, the fat man rode on, absolutely declining to give it to anyone else, but this time he slung it across his saddle in front. Then in the centre of a big field, pride overcame his hurts. He directed Tommy where to stand so as to encourage the dogs with a good view. He rode out alone, observed by all, carefully reversing his sack and shaking vigorously.

"I can't bear much more," said Martin weakly.

For what fell out was a fox, dead, and crushed quite flat. Mat O'Donnell had fallen on it. The big man staring at the crushed thing in bitter silence.

"If it is pancakes we are going to hunt," observed Larry, picking up the defunct vulpine.

"The—damn—tricksther," said O'Donnell breathing heavily, his face as a disappointed child's.

"The—dirty—tricksther," he said again, unheeding the roar of laughter all around him. "To spite us all at the last."

Tommy rocked on his horse. The hounds gave tongue and rushed at the dead fox, no one had breath to notice them, and the grey mare bolted. She fled across the flat meadows, skimming in perilous fashion across the narrow trenches; her neck set like an iron bar, until going too fast she crashed into a ditch and rolled Tommy under water. She came out like a lamb, but she had shown what she could do.

Miss Birdie McGuffy wished to know if it was a game on them, and Martin got off his horse to have his laugh out.

"It's all very well to be laughin' but where will we get a hunt now?" said O'Donnell sadly. "I put a hen out to coax this one yesterday, and there's the way he thanks me. Tearin' me trouser an' dyin' for his own pleasure."

"Just what you'd expect from a fox," said Grania, wiping her eyes.

Mr. O'Donnell, quite openly, suggested a good drag. Larry the Hare could change his boots and run it. "There are all the conveniences at the house," he said eagerly, "to smear that trickstering fox with."

But Tommy shook his head angrily. He quested without much hope, up the hills, hunted several hares and gave up early.

Then with new firmness he called a meeting of the committee for the next day.

"He is very peevish over that misfortune," O'Donnell opined. "The first wild fox we met this ages past."

Every one was gloomy that night at Castletown. Tirrie wept in her own room, the three men sat in theirs, talking together. Tommy giving occasional bitter looks at his cheque book. Mrs. Maguire raged because things had not been better managed and Mary Kate burnt a goose to cinders. Juliet was the only cheerful member of the party, even though she had put sugar instead of salt into an elaborate entrée made of tinned lobster.

Tommy Blackburn felt the sadness of a lost dream as he met his committee next day. His high hopes, his hunting of hounds; his great gallops and brilliant casts were as a big bank-note charred to light blackness, valueless, and still apparent to mock its owner. The three were politely firm. There were no foxes, nothing to hunt. The Kilanour hounds were useless to them and they must give them up.

Barry sat in sulky silence, he recognized defeat. Mat

O'Donnell constituted himself spokesman and pleaded for his hunt.

" They'd buy foxes. Larry the Hare would get a bunch from the cliffs. The Major would see sport another year, and great sport the year after."

Tommy regretted icily. He did not feel justified in bringing people out day after day for nothing.

" If that's all," said O'Donnell genially, " don't be frettin'." " We never had any foxes and we seldom had any real sport, so we don't expect it. So if you're satisfied, Major, we are." And O'Donnell looked as if there was nothing more to be said.

Tommy spluttered and Martin choked a little.

When it was made quite clear that the Master would not live as the fabled horse until grass grew, they grew sulky, O'Donnell really hurt at their loss. Barry furious, but outwardly polite, ready to flash out if there was any suggestions of misrepresentations.

" I had runs," he said sharply.

" Ye had surely," confirmed O'Donnell. " Barry got the stuff to hunt."

Martin felt quite sure that this was true, but his manner as he said so made them feel nervous.

" If your horse is galloping and the dogs crying—what matter ? " said O'Donnell uneasily.

It was over. This time there were no eager discussions as to meets and coverts ; no planning and high hopes. Tommy had thrown and lost. The other two could look upon it as an episode. Their seasons rolled in front of them. Tommy had staked his all, grabbed greedily at his slice of cake and having gulped it down too fast, felt a child's bitter disappointment because he could get no more.

His Aunt Eliza had served him scurvily.

" Hang legs," he burst out suddenly, forgetting the committee's presence.

" Hot water is the best," said O'Donnell soothingly.

"Plenty of it and pass the horse on to another. It's the only remedy."

Tommy replied gloomily that one could not pass oneself on.

"They're all a bit light-headed with the shell-shock," said O'Donnell audibly to Malone.

It was over. Bathed in gloom, Tommy counted up what he had spent, and as sorrow brings its own reaction, decided that he could finish the season at Cahervalley, even if it meant taking the job abroad early in the summer. He would gulp down another piece of cake despite his present indigestion.

Tirrie had watched the men drive up. She saw them gather on the steps talking in evident ill humour, and she knew that her good days were over too. The old sordid poverty would descend on Castletown, the old loneliness and silence, the gates guarded against McGill, the duns at the door.

She stood among her blackened flowers too spiritless to dig and weed, and Tommy came out to her.

"You're going?" Tirrie said, her lips trembling.

"Going without a hope in the world, Tiranogue," he replied. They walked on together talking. Tirrie looking up with shy sympathy. Sir Martin, watching them from the window, wished aloud that he had never come to the beastly place.

He went down to the big kitchen, where Mary Kate dusted a spotless chair for him and regretted their decision.

"There bein' some life an' splutter in the fire with ye above," she said sadly. "A bit to cook an' enough to ate. Not the pat of butter saved for Master Barry an' dry bread for the rest. An' nothin' at all for Miss Tirrie, the craythur."

"Why was not Miss Tirrie going to the dance?" Martin questioned skilfully. "Why could she not get a dress?"

" Even if the missus'd let her." Mary Kate sawed chops vigorously. " She has no money. She had somethin' she sowlt she tolt me, an' out every pinny wint to pay Cregan's bill, becos they were sellin' him up. She tolt him not to tell, but of course he did, with the gratitude that was in him. He is the little saddler in the town, Sir Martin, and Master Barry owed him a sight of money."

Martin drew in a sharp, whistling breath. So that was why Tirrie would not come to Cara to spend her money. She had none. Martin began to think energetically.

" The missus has some down on the child," said Mary Kate, " an' it is ever at the back of me mind that it is becos the money her father left comes to her one day, but I might be wrong."

Martin went up the back stairs to Tirrie's room. She was out, but he took a modern vase and plate and walked away with them thoughtfully. Tirrie and Tommy were crossing the yard together.

Mrs. Maguire's voice rose calling Tirrie, angrily. Martin met her at the swing door.

" Exploring the house," she said with the fórced sweetness which she conjured up with evident difficulty.

" Like a spot of sugar you'd float on mustard," was Larry's diagnosis of it.

Martin's " Yes " lacked interest in anything.

Tirrie was scolded and sent to her room, Florence Maguire storming away with the weariness of failure heavy upon her. No one else would take their hounds, and unless Barry could secure his heiress she saw them slipping into absolute ruin.

" And Tirrie—if—Tirrie's money went." She was afraid of these strangers. Mat Riley was ill, and there was always the lurking fear of his death.

So she went away holding fury and hopelessness biting at her heart, yet hoping still for Barry. That worthy youth had gone out, ostensibly to visit the Halloran girls, driving a hired dogcart and with the bitterness of his horse's loss making him as furious as his mother.

Grania and Herbert went to Killone to help to decorate the court-house, taking Juliet and Dahlia with them. Yards of coloured muslin were rolled and tacked against the walls with the usual out of place look which muslin assumes against whitewash. A few flags were strung up and a great deal of ivy distributed among the muslin.

Miss McGuffy was of opinion—she had done most of it—"that it was fine and tasty but queer-coloured, for one by one all the muslins had given out, and they had to whack on the nearest colour they'd got." The floor was being bestrewn with French chalk "to get a slip on it," and the sitting-out places were pleasantly secluded; the Judge's box being looked on as the most desirable.

Nothing was finished. The Cara caterers were stamping in the supper-room in a chaos of their own making, and yet somehow at the last moment the remnants of ivy and muslin would be cleared off and the ballroom ready.

Grania wired for flowers for the supper table. She was firm as to the proposed decoration of quarts of whisky; Champagne had to be purchased; and she looked forward to the evening with complete delight.

Tirrie rode Sweetheart over and looked in wistfully, her eyes filling with tears, until suddenly rebellion sprang up within her. She would come to this dance. She would see it, and dance herself, even in her old white frock. The many coloured muslins, the draped gas lights, the moss and ivy were to her as fairyland. She gripped the ticket which she had put into her pocket and the desire to live was hot on her.

She rode home, passing Riley's home where the solicitor fought for breath behind closely shut windows, then took Sweetheart over some little jumps, the joy of each light bound bringing a stab of pain, for soon Sweetheart would have gone and there would be nothing to ride.

Tirrie was elfishly like a moonsprite, her face white, her eyes heavy from surreptitious tears, but she struck no note of pity in her mother, who came storming to meet her. The girl had just forgotten her troubles in a day dream in which Sweetheart was winning the Grand National after a season's hunting ; she slipped from her saddle, her glance a blend of obstinate rebellion and timidity.

The storm burst. How had Cregan been paid ? Where had Tirrie found money ? A sick fear lurked behind Florence Maguire's rage. She was afraid the girl had been to Riley and got something of her own.

" Which of those men gave it to you ? Shaming your own flesh and blood for a wretched shopman."

Tirrie stood in silence. She might have known that Cregan would not hold his tongue. She did not know what to say.

" Who—Who——," the hard-faced woman came nearer, her hand up. " I will know, girl."

" No one—gave it to me. I got it myself." Tirrie might have run through the vocabulary, and yet she could not have chosen a better answer.

" It was my own," she flared mutinously. For the second time she saw a leaden hue chase the red from her mother's face.

" You won't tell me. You were always the same, Tiranogue, a ——," Mrs. Maguire bit back the word curse, " A blight to me since you were born."

The child's face grew whiter, she said nothing.

She stood for a space listening as she was ordered, but in tones which trembled, never again to pay debts which she had nothing to do with. Never to dare to interfere. Not to presume if money was given to her, not to believe nonsense. And then Mrs. Maguire almost ran away, torn between fear and rage. Had Riley kept his word and betrayed her at last ?

Tirrie put up the mare and called Barty. Mary Kate's son was always a ready sympathiser, he promised to do as she asked in the evening.

" An' isn't it the pity they are all off," he said. " The sthables dried up for nothin', an' the dogs like to go hungry agin. The mistake of it all Miss Tirrie was spharin' the herrins. What is the price of fish if Larry thrailed one every day unbeknownt, that soldier officer isn't able to know, an' here they'd be. It was Larry's grandjer did it, Miss Tirrie."

Martin lounged through the day, not in the least interested in the dance. He looked about for Tirrie, asking her once or twice if Cinderella would not come to the dance.

" You're more of a moonsprite than ever to-day," he said glumly. " P'raps I'll come back and talk moon-talk instead of dancing."

The moonsprite, who was dreaming of coloured muslins, merely smiled, wistfully. Her fit of rebellion was dying out.

She dressed her sisters. Juliet had got a new pink dress, in shape a blend of nightgown and pillar box. Dahlia one in blue, which wound to a spiral round her ankles and trailed an independent tail of something brocaded just to show that narrowness was not shortness of stuff. One girl burnt her hair frizzling it, and Juliet's pink shoes were too big and fell off.

But they came to dinner flushed and excited. Dances did not often come to Killone.

" One would think Grania would give a hop, with all her money," said Dahlia. " Perhaps she will now, when she goes to this one."

Tirrie saw them leave in the motor. She watched from the staircase and the wave of longing carried her on its crest. She ran to her room, looked at her muslin and then candle in hand—with Snap, sure that it must be a rat hunt, at her heels—she tore up the stairs to an attic. A big box stood in one corner full of fancy dresses. Motley of cotton, velvet and satin, of tarnished silver lace and gold bullion. Tirrie had worn them many times. Posing as a Court Jester or Queen Elizabeth or a Russian peasant, but she knew there was one filmy thing in black with silver moons on it, laid in a box.

She tore it out now, put her candle down and stood before a dim, long glass.

It fitted. It was no more shapeless than Juliet's. Soft black with little silver moons tinkling, long sleeves caught back, and with it black shoes and stockings.

In a minute little shabby Tirrie was a fair woman, her arms white against the dead softness of the stuff. She twisted her soft hair and tied a little fillet of silver moons round it and rushed downstairs. Five miles between her and Killone, but there was Barty and the jennet, and it was fine.

Mary Kate fell into a chair when she saw the vision in black and silver which shrieked, " I'm just going, don't tell," and was gone into the yard.

The jennet made bitterly protesting progress through the fine night until the powerful headlights of a car caused him to swerve across the road, and Martin peered out.

" One step amore an' we were down the black trench," said Barty. " No but half a step, an' there we'd be I tell ye."

" I had a headache. I was coming back," said Martin getting out of the car. " You—Cinderella in the Pumpkin."

Tirrie observed calmly that he might now drive her to Killone. She got into the car.

" If ye try to turrn around there ye are sure to get into the bog," said Barty, " an' unless David backs very sthuddy that'll be as dangerous an' thricky."

David backed with due steadiness until they could turn.

Tirrie sat with thumping heart until she saw the magical red baize let down the courthouse steps, and the flare of light inside the open door. She pitched her coat into the car, and ran in.

" Goddess of the night no less," said Martin, moving his eyeglass.

It was late, but the train from Cara had travelled with its usual deliberation and the second dance was only beginning.

The room smelt of gas, french chalk and drying moss. It was fiercely hot, but Tirrie gasped at its glory.

Pink and green, scarlet and yellow and the kaleidoscope of dancers. Dahlia's train fluttering rakishly, Juliet pink as her dress ; Birdie McGuffy a flare of sky blue and silver decorated with garnets ; Grania in white, dancing with Tommy. Two strangers in black looking on disconsolately.

The air quivered with heat and light and the energetic thrum of the band.

Tirrie felt a firm arm catch her and the next moment she was industriously trying a two-step and picking it up like lightning.

Frank Maguire in his father's pink evening coat, stared thunderously. He had sent Tirrie the ticket, but his cunning brain had weighted the pros and cons of her coming, and decided against it.

Now he saw Tirrie in a black dress which looked just as shapeless as other people, dancing with Sir Martin.

" I declare they must have made it up to come," muttered Frank, " an' I full as cake with currants with Birdie and all on my card."

If Juliet had caught sight of her sister in the ballroom she might have been less lenient. Fortunately for Tirrie they met in the judge's box—where Juliet was sitting out with Herbert Duff.

" Tirrie—when mamma hears," she burst out.

" She won't if you don't tell her," said Tirrie. " And you ? "

Tirrie's eyes twinkled a little. Juliet looked dubious and then grinned.

" We won't," she said, shutting the door of the box.

Tommy's enjoyment of the dance was marred by the sight of Violet Weston and her mother. Miss Weston greeted him as one who had been injured. She had wired two days ago asking him to let them know if he could not get rooms in Killone, as if he could they were starting at once. They had arrived. Mrs. Weston broke in, her emotion almost overcoming her, that she could not describe it. They would sit up all night. They had eaten sheep chops, not dead long enough to be called mutton, in the room with the Cara band, which declined to go to play until it had fed. And hearing of the dance they had come in dinner dresses.

" As Larry is with us, I suppose they never sent out the wire," said Tommy unhappily, " except by the postman and I think he's got influenza. And I wrote to tell you the hunting was no good." Here he felt a qualm. He had given the letter to Barty to post.

Tommy could only introduce the Westons to Frank Maguire, who was sorry he couldn't give them a turn, and the O'Donnells and the soldiers who were all booked up. Tirrie in her black had caused many cards to be filled.

Tommy's evening was completely spoilt by this arrival of the Westons, for Mrs. Weston took the failure of the Kilanour hunting as a personal insult. Why were the hounds not good ? Why had he written at first giving such glowing descriptions of it all ? Why were telegrams not delivered ? They were going really to sit up all night in arm-chairs. The men next door to them had called for porter and playing cards in their bedroom, and said they were going by the six train and wouldn't bother to go to bed.

Tommy apologized vaguely. He had found foxes at first. He couldn't keep it up. He was going to Cahervalley while his money lasted.

At this, Mrs. Weston's expression contained so much repression of feeling that he hurriedly introduced her to Captain Malone, who in flattered tones asked the lady to take a bite with him, and led her away before she could protest.

" Being both at the age when a bit to eat is better than the light fantastic," said Malone jovially, making an enemy of a fairly young mother.

The arrivals then spoilt Tommy's dance with Grania. For she wanted to know all about them, and why they had never come over, and whose friend Miss Weston was ? Here she eyed Tommy suspiciously as he said, " No one's."

Violet Weston herself was too discreet to show open temper, but she was very close to peevish tears. Such a place, a room like cheap sugar-sticks, and people who jumped like lambs instead of dancing.

When the hurly-burly of supper brought them close to Grania, Tommy made the introduction and Violet's plaints were deep. An invitation to Castle Crehan was given and accepted, but only for a few days, Grania explained, as they were leaving to hunt.

" Miss Weston had come over——" Here Grania paused.

" To hunt with Major Blackburn's hounds," Violet explained. " They had known him in London and had had such glowing descriptions of the sport. Written so often."

" Oh then if you want to see Irish hunting no doubt you will come on to Cahervalley," said Grania, her voice pleasant.

" The smile Miss Duff gave that girl now was like a sweet with the whipped cream mixed with salt," said Frank Maguire to Tirrie. " I wonder what ailed her ? "

Tirrie did not know. She was radiant, even supping with clumsy Frank, who loaded her plate with breasts of chicken and aspics and lobster salad all together.

"Just as well to secure what one'd want before its swept," he explained as he filled another plate with meringues.

But all things end. Tirrie listened in silence when Martin sympathized with her as to those London people taking up Tommy so much. Grania had been surprised and relieved when Herbert did not turn up for two dances with her, though woman-like she snapped at him when he apologized, and she did not notice that he was generally absent from the ballroom.

The musicians began to play with desperate weariness, old people yawned, young faces grew lined, and a sickly light peered in through the unblinded windows.

Miss Halloran, her expression thunderous, asked Barry if he meant to take them home, as having been an hour late in calling for them they had got no dancing.

The heiress's expression did not brighten when Barry explained that he must give a lift to Birdie McGuffy, as her carriage had broken down. The Hallorans considered Birdie beneath them. They also said that Barry would have to go on for four miles to Crageen, but they supposed it was his affair and they guessed now—quite correctly, too—why he had been late.

Tirrie was squeezed into Martin's car, afraid now that her fun was over. Mrs. Maguire, grim faced, let them in, and it was Juliet, looking singularly radiant who asked her mother for some hot tea—the dining-room fire was alight—while Tirrie crept upstairs.

Any great pleasure brings its reactions. Tirrie's little bedroom had never looked as shabby to her as when she woke at ten next day. Wonderful decorations of muslin and ivy, blaring music and flaring lights, the thrill of feet flying on the slippery floor, the glory of a real partner instead of a chair, two-steps instead of waltzes.

It was over. Every one was going away and the old house would be silent and dreary again.

Florence Maguire, on seeing her youngest daughter, wished to know why she had stayed in bed instead of taking up her sisters' breakfasts.

Barry had suggested a twelve o'clock meet of the hounds, but the thought of bagged foxes was distasteful to Tommy, who refused.

Tommy spent a dreary morning looking at his bank-book and countering Hanley's attacks on his purse, that worthy requiring tail-pieces and fresh bandages and rugs to move his 'osses proper.

Old Shamus, sorry to lose them, whispered a word of caution.

" Take my advice, Major, an' let him go. There'll be accounts from forage merchants as long as garden lines, an' he no manner of use for anythin' but to sit be his fire an' roar orders."

Barry eyed his sister sourly all day, but he did not betray her. She did not know that it was due to a certain agreement between him and Martin concerning an unsound horse, and also to an understratum of ear as to how much Tirrie had noticed at the ball.

For Barry had to answer his mother's questions as to the Halloran girls with Tirrie listening, her face demurely blank.

After luncheon, a meal of roast rabbits and apple dumpling, she went across to Castle Crehan, riding Sweetheart. The Westons had already arrived and Grania looked worried.

She had resented Herbert's inattentions and received careless answers.

" I suppose we'll fix it up, Grania," he said, without the slightest attempt to be affectionate, " but we may as well be sensible about it from the start."

She wanted the place and he wanted the Duff money and so it would be, he implied that.

Grania's eyes were heavy, she talked absently, and looked really glad to see Tirrie.

" One of the aborigines," said Violet, looking out, " in funny gaiters. A girl."

Grania was glad to be able to reply—" The Maguire girl whom Major Blackburn admires," with the same salty sweet smile of the night before.

At this Violet became confidential, wondering if Major Blackburn was really so well off as he had said. Or if he was spending his capital.

Grania knew that Tommy was poor, but she only smiled.

Tirrie had ridden over wrapped in wretchedness, but as the sun rolls up mists a thought of Grania's made her world sunlit.

The two girls went out together into the garden, going to the new greenhouses and talking there.

" I know it will be more awful than ever," Tirrie said sadly. " People were kind to me for the first time and now I shall know what real loneliness means."

Grania felt that it was quite useless having money if one did not make people happy with it. Tirrie must come to Cahervalley. She would see that Mrs. Maguire gave leave. Tirrie could wear some of her, Grania's, frocks and top boots if she didn't mind. When Tirrie had finished gasping—she could not speak—Grania looked at her shrewdly.

" And you'll like to see something more of Major Blackburn ? " she said.

" Oh yes, if he lends me Sweetheart to ride," said Tirrie rapturously.

Kilanour was already as a thing of the past. The episode endowing Barry with new shoots and dry stables. They were all leaving immediately. The Westons as they had come to Ireland deciding to go to the Arvagh Hotel, the Duff's old place was not far away.

" It will be all picnicing with half the rooms empty and hired furniture," said Grania, " but the stables are good, and I've a lot of horses coming to be tried."

At Castletown, Florence Maguire sat in bitter wrath. She called Barry and flung him a note. Miss Halloran regretted without much finesse that she could not come to Castletown to tea, especially as she understood that Mr. Maguire was taking tea at Crageen, the note then finished.

" Is that true ? " flashed Mrs. Maguire, " with that vulgar Birdie ? "

" That was only some boasting of Birdie's to the old ones on the way home," said Barry carelessly.

But he rode away that afternoon.

CHAPTER XIV

THE train from Killone puffed and clanked up to the junction in the same fashion that it had come down it, reviled at each station and half an hour late. But there were no high hopes travelling with Tommy now; no dreams of brilliant casts and superlative skill in handling hounds. It was over. He had spent a great deal of money, and the remnants would give him a good season. He had had no trial of his horses, but he hoped they would go well with the famous Caher-valley pack.

After that he must leave England for hot skies and hard work, and he confided his opinion of his late Aunt Eliza to Grania very bitterly.

"If she hadn't brought me up to expect it," he said, "but there you are. She paid my bills and did me proud and then, just because she got legs on the brain, outed me. If I had an income." Tommy looked distastefully at Herbert, who was leaving Cara with manifest reluctance, and who had shown open resentment because he was not allowed to keep Castle Crehan open.

The little hills humped up and fell behind. They changed into a dawdling local train, and swept by the glory of flat pastures. Green and green again. "Nebuchadnezzar's country," as the boy had said. Great banks sound and safe, ditches, open country in which one could see hounds and only needed nerve and judgment to keep one's place.

Here and there a strand of wire, the fox hunter's enemy, but it was not increasing.

Grania had asked the three men to stay at Ballinlea.

She had not thought it necessary to include the Westons. They got out at a small station and the motors met them.

Martin had driven his car up. Ballinlea was a square house in bad repair. It had been, as the local man said, "lashed into a bit of shape," but was kicking against the blows. Fires blazed in high, old-fashioned grates. The hired furniture was lost in the big, square rooms.

There had been consternation at Castletown when Grania came to ask for Tirrie. With the forced smile which set so uneasily on her hard face, Florence Maguire temporized. The child had no clothes. She was not grown up. Then when Grania insisted Mrs. Maguire began to think.

None of the men had noticed Tirrie, save as a child. She would be away from Frank Maguire and—Mat Riley was recovering. A tussle with death often wakes a slumbering conscience. Men fear less what they do in life than the tarnished reputation they leave behind them. Mat might tell. Mrs. Maguire meant to prevent him, but she wanted time to find arguments with which to persuade him.

So she assented graciously. Having done so she gave Tirrie five pounds to buy some clothes with, looking grim at the girl's outburst of gratitude.

So Tirrie travelled in the train with Grania, and stared in awe when she was ushered into a best bedroom with a bright fire in it, and Grania's maid laid out an evening dress for her, one which Grania had provided.

The hounds met next day at Ballin. Tommy was having two horses out, the grey and the bay, Martin was trusting to the dun, Trevor to his grey cob.

It was as if a season began all over again when Tommy saw his pink coat laid ready and knew that there would be no weariness of questing for non-existent foxes. This was qualified by the shining tall hat replacing his hunting cap. He had wanted so badly to hunt hounds.

A soft grey day shimmered in tints of pearl. A west wind moved the tangle of old trees.

The dining-room had been made blatantly hideous by a suite of oak with red glass let into the sideboard, but there was no hard-featured hostess dispensing her fare grudgingly, and no slouching Barry growling at everything.

Tirrie was too excited to eat, until Martin put something before her and she absorbed it mechanically. Herbert Duff's swallow tail and blue waistcoat was the very latest in hunting fashion. Herbert himself was glum and inclined to be sure that he would have a bad horse to ride.

Old Kilanour drifting down absently, looked wistfully at the strange room and aloud to himself, said that Herbert was a bit of an ass but what could one do. He met Herbert's glance of fury quite unconscious of what he had said.

They started in two motors, driving past Arvagh woods, through Cara village and along a flat road with Knockadreen poking its nose up to their right, and a distant line of hills showing mistily purple in front.

This was a meet and not a farce. Hounds were waiting up in a little field. Tommy as ex-M.F.H. went in to them and thought moodily of how he had admired the Kilanours. The throaty, splay-footed, bleary-eyed, half-starved brutes he had left behind.

Yet he found time, ingenuously, to tell the whip how he had just given up a pack because there were no foxes, and observed with pride the respect the statement commanded.

The grey mare had not been jostled or crowded at Kilanour. She laid back her ears as the horses eddied up and down the road, kicked once and made mulish snatches at her bits.

Hounds went through the avenue gate, dashing into the sticks and a crash of music rang out.

"This is a very different place to start from," said Standish Blundell, eyeing Tommy. "If we stay here and they cross the river we're done. If we go down the river and they break across the railway we're done too. And there's always the chance that if they do cross the river and we're there, that it will be too high to ford. Two fellows swam it once and had a great hunt to themselves. The Master and another."

Tommy felt too cheery for forebodings. He hoped his English mare would manage the big banks.

"The fourth or fifth fall generally teaches them to kick back anyway," said Blundell encouragingly. "And after a dozen they'll change. That is if they dislike falling."

Tommy grunted unhappily.

The crash of tongues echoed and swelled. A fox could dodge for half an hour in the sticks.

Herbert had hired a tall, narrow bay with fired hocks and a wild eye. She was shifting and humping her quarters, not from temper but from a permanent sore back, and Herbert chucked her mouth at every movement. Grania had two to try and rode a very good-looking light-weight grey.

"Goon, away." The magical cry which never fails to thrill our hearts. As the dice of the day are tossed up and we do not know if it will be our turn for double sixes, or double blanks; or the mediocre three and one. The toot on the horn cheery and strong. A big fox stealing across the road, going easily, stopping to look back before he slipped away over the railroad.

Every man's hand to his hat for that last jam down. Reins tightened, horses quivering. Brave hearts, watching wildly for hounds. Faint ones wondering if they could skirt round by the Bridge and slip along to Ballinamara by the road.

"He is sure to turn in." The wish father to the thought.

Yet they loved to come out and camouflage, each day their dislike to big fences.

A pied head topping the wall, another and another; the lady pack savage for blood, hesitating for a moment on the road, then away like a flock of earth birds, flying at a pace it takes a race-horse to live with.

The Field raced madly for the railway gates, the only way across, until they jammed together on the line. Tommy's grey went uneasily but well. She ploughed through the holding land gallantly, and as they settled down, hounds running hard for Ballinamara, she was out on her own, and jumping the banks safely, if with more zeal than skill. Martin's dun showed himself as good in this cream of countries as in Kilanour. He could gallop and stay and jump. Grania, new to hunting, found that the local dealer had sent her something safe and steady, and Trevor's cob, though sorely puzzled by the ditches, did not fall. The same men are out each time let the hunt be when it will. In Cahervalley there were Derek Knox Harding (the master), Blundell, Sandy Acland, Norman Rivers, Anthony. Little Gannymede Bunn following some one steadily and getting along. The same women too. At times they fall or miss a hunt, but save for that, after a mile one could almost shut one's eyes and call the names, excepting the gallant soldiers who come and go.

Herbert Duff, having galloped against his will across the first fields, manœuvred his tall horse through a gate and over a gap and joined a procession of wise men tearing along a grass lane between ditches. The hireling, accustomed to having its three guineas worth relentlessly extracted, showing temper at the change.

They flew on, pace steadying over the grass country. Air rushing against heated faces, eyes on the hounds; and the clean keen joy of it, the constant exercise of wit and eye. How to get the best place in that overgrown bank; would they swing right or left? Was that fence ahead with the ominous posts wired and would it be wise to keep on to it ?

Ever new, always changing, a dish which cannot sour on the palate; of a surety the chase of a fox on a good horse, across a perfect country must have been started by the gods. Its very disappointments make the joy keener—a failure creates fresh hope. It is only the curmudgeon who belittles the hunt he has missed.

"Oh yes, I know. Four miles at the most. Thirty minutes! Then you never could have gone more than a field at a time. A dirty bit of country anyhow." It is human nature, but the really good man, who only misses a hunt through bad luck, listens to every word of its tale and says how he wishes he had been there.

Hounds checked in a rushy field, casting themselves with swing and dash.

Tommy thought of the Kilanours dribbling aimlessly, and Larry capping them, and smiled.

The was *Hunting*, going as strong wine to the head. But as all joy is pain's twin sister the stab came with the ecstasy. These others would ride next season and for many seasons. His days would be over when the March winds blew hunting's death-knell and the grey dust made its pall. Hunting goes to its end down hard frost-held roads.

Next year Tommy might be picturesque when he rode, but he would hunt no more.

This pain having stabbed, he heard Joy's whisper and he forgot.

"What a country. What hounds."

"That English mare is a real good one," said Blundell, who liked to show civility to strangers.

Some one else praised the mare. The Cahervalley Field are kindly people. Tommy's spirits rose higher. Suppose he could sell his two for many hundreds, eke out his money and have one more season.

"I want to sell her," he said.

The Master wanted a horse. He looked with favour at the grey, which he had seen going well on his right.

"Horses are scarce," said Blundell. "You were lucky to find an English one which can jump this country. Knox Harding wants one badly."

They had all fared well except Tirrie. Sweetheart had poked her way gallantly over the dry banks of her own country, but she was young and only lately fed; she struggled gamely through the dust of heavy fields, and all but failed to get there over the first big ditch, and fell into the next.

Tirrie got up to struggle on with the little mare, sobbing, and to pull up at last and jog in miserable humour down a friendly boreen. Far off she could see the hunt, the hounds mere specks, the horses, distance making their movements those of mechanical toys, and the long drawn out tail coming on.

"They're for Ballinamara," a man told her. "Let ye make west to the cross-roads, an' up to the big hill and you'll be there as soon as them. Look! Where ye see the road riders pastin' now."

Tirrie was foolish enough not to take advice. Her mare had got her second wind and she got into the fields believing that she could pick up hounds when she saw them check. Sweetheart did her gallant best, but she knew nothing of wide ditches and came down again in five minutes to be hauled out trembling.

Martin missed Tirrie at the check, but in such a big Field she might have followed any division.

There it was! Amethyst had it. They were away again flying for Ballinamara, the going lighter, the fences smaller. Tommy's mare was caught in the rush for a gate in a wired bank. She threw up her head, was hustled through, and ran away, over the light field at racing pace. Standish Blundell's horse was knocked off its feet, Grania and Knox Harding in the other direction. The grey mare jumped the bank, then she fled along madly.

" She passed like an arrow Kildare and Cock Sparrow," quoted Martin, watching her. " I knew she wouldn't last good long. Sakes ! "

For the Master was poking deliberate way out at a corner, the rest of the fence being wired, and the gap was blocked on the landing side by a large iron pig-tub, which a horse had to turn in the air and land clear of.

Head up, the grey mare charged, caught Derek's horse on the quarter, sent him out in a heap and his red-coated rider with a souce into the tub.

The grey fled on, leaped wildly on to the road and cannoned into Herbert, then put down her head and became a well-mannered hunter.

With heart drowned in bitterness, Tommy jumped back off the road without listening to Herbert, and caught Knox Harding's horse. He stood meekly as the Master, wet and speckled with pollard, loosed his wrath.

" Why the ——. What the devil ? "

" If you only knew, I feel it far more than you do," said Tommy between his teeth.

Knox Harding's reply was eloquent, but he guessed faintly.

" I heard that she was a runaway after I bought her. She never got excited enough to do it before," said Tommy. " What's a pig-tub to another season after all, and I can't be sorrier."

At this Derek rubbed the back of his head suggestively, and then remarked icily that he hoped for the future that the animal would run away somewhere else. Hounds were at fault again and the pressed fox had got a welcome start.

" Of all men to choose the one you wanted to sell her to," said Standish Blundell mildly. " He was like a new Venus rising when he stood up. 'Some have greatness thrust upon them,' " he added, staring at Tommy.

"Notoriety anyhow," said Tommy grimly. "If you knew any way to cure a runaway?"

"Te let some one else try is the only cure I know," said Blundell.

Tommy sighed despondently. The grey made matters worse by fencing perfectly over the big banks as they ran slowly into Ballinamara. The clever crowd joined them and Herbert Duff came up to say that Tommy had nearly killed him, and said it furiously.

"Never even apologized."

"With the Master in the pig-tub he wouldn't have cared who he killed," said Standish in his melancholy voice. "Couldn't you see that? You were the same as another to him."

Their fox having got breathing space had slipped through the thick gorse and found an unstopped hole. The Master swore that he would have killed had it not been for his delay. He would have cast forward. He looked angrily at unhappy Tommy.

As they turned back to put hounds into covert, Tommy spied his second horse jogging along the lane way at the top of the hill and signalled to the man. With a sigh of relief he got off the fretting grey and on to his bay. Grania made Tirrie take her other horse.

"Catch the Master's eye with that one now," said Standish Blundell. "That's a lovely horse. He'll forgive you if he gets something good."

"There is also a flaw in this emerald," said Tommy coldly.

Hounds oped in covert.

The same thrill running through the Field. The same eager anticipation. Another hunt. Those who had had good luck in the last hoped to have it again. Those who had fallen meant not to fall this time. The skirters thought happily of the roads which twisted through this particular section of the country. They sat up with peculiar alertness, making little remarks concerning lack of scent and the softness of the going ; and deep in their hearts hoping for a bad fox and a slow hunt.

Men who have ridden with the Cahervalleys will remember that twenty-five minutes from Ballinamara. A big fox broke north facing for Burra ; hounds were out in a cloud almost on his brush, settling down with that fury which makes a breast-high scent. They raced across the deep land fenced by wide drains, and after the first five minutes it was a hunt in which only a really fast horse could live.

" That may happen but this is." Tommy forgot the grey's misdemeanours, the Master in the pig-tub, as the bay galloped resolutely across the low-lying green fields, fencing perfectly. He had originally come from Ireland.

They crossed the wide grass track fenced by two yawners. They got over the well-known three-legged fence, a ditch, a bank, another ditch, a bank, and a ditch beyond, where several horses plumped in, and the fox swung right-handed going back towards Ballinamara.

Hard pressed he did not touch it, but held up the hill towards Dullin.

Horses sobbed as they recrossed the deep fields, snatching breath when they got into sounder land. And so far little Tirrie, on the trial horse, had tasted her first success in the hunting field. Her mount was an active brown, small but well bred. Tirrie left it all to him and he had gone faultlessly. Now as they jumped the three legged fence for the second time he was lathered, but full of going and carrying his light burden out to the left of hounds.

Tommy's face was scarlet, his eyes alight, for the bay had shown no spot of softness, and when he failed a little in the deep had responded to a touch of spurs and strode up the hill like a lion.

But as they crossed a rushy field, he faltered, half stopped, and taken in an iron grip went on sluggishly.

"He's nearly had enough," said Martin, galloping past. "He'll stop like a clock, Tommy. I've seen it before. I know him."

The next fence was a high bank with a thick black hedge growing on it. They had to pull up and look for places. Blundell found one, shoving his big young bay into the thickness, getting on with a scramble and boring through. Acland got over and Martin, and Tommy went at it. The bay horse was going too fast to refuse. He jumped out, having no desire to fall, and stopped on the top. Whip, spur, voice taking no effect. He stood still, legs stuck out stiffly, without the faintest intention of leaving the broad bank he was on. Fate elected that the Master was the next man, also that the thorns were too thick to push through anywhere else.

"Hi! get on with you," was the beginning of frantic pleas and cries. The bay did not move, neither would he come back.

"It's a trick he's got," almost wailed Tommy. "Hit him behind."

"My God! you like variety," roared the Master, thumping vigorously.

"I believe nothing'll move him," said Tommy, "an' I've no room to get off and pull him unless I go into the ditch itself."

When the Master was too hoarse to say anything further, the bay elected to jump and stand still in the field outside. The Master, remarking sweetly, as purple-visaged, he pursued his hounds, that he trusted the next horse he would see Tommy on was a persistent refuser at the *first* fence.

Twenty-five minutes without the semblance of a check. No point and no kill, for their fox got in, but the fastest hunt they had had for three of four seasons, over a perfect country. Not a strand of wire and the bushed-up bank the only one which could not be taken anywhere.

Grania was tired, and Tirrie had ridden her second horse. Tommy would hunt no more that day. When he induced the bay to move and got out on to the road he looked most unhappily at the Master, who, to his surprise, smiled at him pleasantly.

"Get rid of those two," he said. "I might not keep my temper next time, might say something to you."

Tommy pushed his hat up a little to let his head cool.

His hopes of making money of his horses were over. He knew now that he must sell them and get something else, and that it would make his money go the faster.

Martin joined them just as they found the car. His dun had had enough. Tirrie was riding by herself, her small face aglow.

"If I could only be somewhere in a world of horses," she said dreamily. "All hunters and hunting, and never go back to Castletown. A world of hunters."

"Even in the moon," said Martin.

"Even in the moon, over cream-cheese jumps riding after moonbeams," said Tirrie soberly.

"And nothing else counts," said Martin. "Suppose now there was some one who would give you lots of horses —on the earth."

"I'd rather have the horses by themselves, and besides no one can," said Tirrie. "Nice people never have fortunes," here she looked at Tommy.

Martin grunted a little drearily. He pulled back.

When Flynn the dealer came to see the grey, Tommy made no attempt to disguise her failings. She bolted and she had bolted before. Mr. Flynn knew of bits which he relied upon and he offered to exchange the grey for a good black horse, provided Tommy agreed to the substantial boot required.

The handsome bay puzzled Mr. Flynn greatly. Tommy did not reveal this one's fault, and Flynn knew something had happened, as he had seen the horse go brilliantly.

" He'll suit some people perfectly," said Tommy bitterly. " And he fences like a dream, and he's fast."

Flynn looked at the spur-marks on the bay's flanks. With gentle tact he added twenty pounds to the price of the second horse he wished to sell to Tommy. There were also sundry weals across the shining quarters.

" He thrun an eye over him like the last thrump, there was so much judgmint in it," said Connolly afterwards.

The alacrity with which Tommy accepted the price offered made Mr. Flynn ruminate bitterly as he rode home. But he rode the bay on before he discovered its faults, and the man who bought the horse never found it out at all, being one of the people who batter along roads.

New horses means more money. Tommy's balance melted, but he put all thoughts of prudence aside and settled down to enjoy himself with the Cahervalleys.

Herbert Duff stayed on to come out languidly and abuse the pack. He meant to hunt in Leicestershire and not over raised grass mounds and caverns of stones. Fly fences for a man who wanted to go.

There was a sense of continual sparring between Grania and Herbert. Touch of foils and glint of steel, and yet always the understanding that they were to be married in time. The old man fretted in the strange house, going about it aimlessly.

" It's as if a net had closed round me," said Grania to Tommy, " or as if I were a goldfinch and saw birdlime on a branch and yet knew that I must hop on to it and stick."

Tommy reviled his dead Aunt Eliza in unmeasured terms.

They were riding home when Grania said this ; jogging through a thick drizzle of warm rain, the whole world dripping as a leaking shoot with soft plashing noises, the mud slimy and sticky. They had been out at Athgarvin and had run slowly through the bog near there so that they were splashed all over.

" We are very wet," said Grania. " We are covered with mud and we have had a bad day. Yet we are just longing for Monday. What does the grip consist of I wonder, with which hunting catches your very heart."

" The grip of air and wind, of hounds' tongues and uncertainty all soldered together with sport," put in Tirrie who was riding behind them. " Stronger than any steel, and part of us once it touches us. And I—I go home next week—to no hunting."

Tirrie pulled back again, riding alone. The thought of Castletown, of rough tongues and rough ways, and the eternal dreariness of poverty. As she jogged in the dusk, the drizzle coating her, she thought also of escape. Frank Maguire had written to her, kind little letters. There was his square house, but Tirrie shivered. Frank was so different now that she had met other men.

" I think your brother Barry has a little game on," he had written in his last letter.

Tirrie thought that he meant the Hallorans. Castletown would be worse than ever with Kate there as mistress.

The hopelessness of youth is a bitter thing, a pit into which the young drop and crouch in numbed, until they see a ladder and scramble laughing into the sunlight. Better the dark trap and the bright sunlight than the level plane age walks on, shrugging shoulders at the pits it once fell into. Looking, ever through a fog, at the sunshine it once basked in. Sorrow and Joy never again to be its boon companions.

Tirrie was happy at the moment, yet looked for the hole which she knew she must fall into.

The Westons had left, going away in bad humour, and unpleasantly candid about it all.

" Irish hunting," Violet had said, " was wretched."

The thick drizzle lifted, rolling back away from a blue sky; the wind whispered and shifted, blowing coldly from the north.

As the three men who had taken up quarters in the Arvagh Hotel drove over to dine with the Duffs, Martin hoped that they were not in for frost, as the glass was rising. Stars twinkled above them and the drip was crisping on tree and grass.

The only one who looked pleased at this news was Lord Kilanour, who hoped a frost might allow him to go home again.

After dinner they played Bridge, a game disturbed by discussions on the day's hunt. Grania, forgetting to lead as she described some fence; Tommy revoking when he bitterly recalled the grey mare.

"No club, partner," snapped Herbert.

"When I saw the pack," said Tommy, "and his face as she squiggled past him. I had just time to look——."

"No club, partner? Why didn't they show them?"

"If he had had a club," said Tommy absently. "His face——."

"You've revoked," said Martin mildly.

"Clubs, I've four clubs, why the Dickens didn't you ask me instead of talking of that pig-tub," spluttered Tommy.

Herbert Duff's expression was more eloquent than speech. When he recovered, he explained matters for the rest of the game. Finally, when playing with Grania, she became so excited about a certain big bank that she blocked herself in her big suit and went down five hundred. Herbert added up the losses, said hunting Bridge was too much for him, and left the table.

"That's the worst of Herbert, he can't really take an interest in hunting," said Grania drearily. "He's quite put out about that Jack of hearts. Don't say its freezing."

But it was. Morning dawned over a silver world, every blade of grass, every bough frosted. The pools were crisped and a blazing glare of sun shone in the east.

They were comforted by the old saw that a white frost brings rain. The sky dulled as a mirror breathed on. The glass fell and the wind flawed to the south-east. The jewels melted, weeping in the grey cold, but before night white flakes fell and lay, and before morning the wind had gone to the north and it froze again.

The weather played hide and seek as Tommy put it. The glass would fall, the ice melt ; plunging hunters come out, and then up went the mercury and the water was black ice again before next morning. There was no stability in it. Snow showers changed to icy rain, rain turned to hail. The skies would clear and under a starlit sky the moisture become crisp and hard.

Skates were oiled but never used. It was never hard enough to skate on, never soft enough to hunt. Weather which fostered unhappy thoughts. Tommy seeing his money fade away and having no return for it.

Grania asked them all to come to Castle Crehan for Christmas and wait ready to fly back to Cahervalley if the frost departed.

They motored down, leaving the glorious flat country with its three lines of hills, a cutting wind blowing, but the grass damp and every sign of a thaw, as they got the humps and bogs of Kilanour.

" To leave that place and know one may never ride over it again," said Tommy, looking backwards into a grey dusk. " Luck does not come my way. Even if I had had this winter——."

" It might only make you want the others more," said Grania.

As their headlights made silver radiance on the little road by Castletown a figure ran out from the yard—Tirrie in her shabby clothes, her small face wan.

" It has been worse than ever," she said, jumping on to the step of the car. "And oh I'm so glad to see you."

Sir Martin, who was driving, bent over the wheel."

"Tommy is in the next car," he said quietly.

"But he's back," said Tirrie, jumping off again. Martin's gear grated as he changed.

CHAPTER XV

LIFE had gone sadly for little Tirrie. Her mother was fighting fiercely, as one with feet planted on the edge of the cliff, and gradually being pushed over. The yards were silent, the poor hounds destroyed. Food seemed to become a problem, save when the Hallorans were asked over and the luncheon table was laden with chickens and game, and the best silver polished.

In this loneliness Tirrie found that Frank Maguire seemed to drift into her life. He slipped over when her mother was out. He asked her to his house and gave her little presents of cheap chocolates and gloves and books.

Tirrie looked with thoughtful eyes at Killilea. She listened to Frank as he described how fine the drawing-room would look with the red carpet and the suite from Cara. He invited his mother, a stout old lady with kindly eyes, to dish up cutlets and light sweets for luncheon at two, instead of having their three o'clock heavy dinner.

The place was warm and quiet. Sometimes Tirrie grew to think of it as a haven, but she invariably wiped Frank Maguire out of the picture.

Poverty's teeth are sharp, they gnawed at her youth. The damp soaked in through her cracked shoes, those which Grania had given her were too thin to walk in. Her coat was so old she shivered when she drove.

Castletown grew almost grim. Juliet and Dahlia kept to themselves, lighting wood fires in their bedrooms. Tirrie would have fared hardly had it not been for Mary Kate.

And even Mary Kate had given notice. She was going to take a little farm with her boy and girl.

"I'd never go but the ways the missus do be at me," she said to Tirrie. "She blempt me but yestherday for the scrap of turf in your room."

The big room so full of treasures, Tirrie said nothing about them, knowing they would not stay there for an hour if her mother guessed that they were of value.

Barry slouched about, occasionally riding over to the neighbouring packs, and McGill the bailiff haunted the doorstep, a grim smile of triumph on his lips, for he rode Barry's horse.

Frost comes coyly to Kilanour, there was only its crisp touch and a slight hardness on the ground when Tirrie ran to Castle Crehan to see Grania.

They were putting up holly and ivy, decorating the old Hall. Herbert, his hands in his pockets, criticizing.

"I'll do away with that hearth and have radiators. The house is like a vault."

"Cub," said the old man, aloud. "Not dead just yet."

Herbert blushed angrily.

He would not go away but hung on, with a tacit understanding between him and Grania.

A marriage had been arranged. She faced it with tragic eyes, foolishly selling her youth to smooth the last few yards of an old man's path through life. Herbert wanted her money and she wanted the old place.

But in a few minutes Herbert disappeared and Tirrie remembered that she had seen Juliet going out.

"They'll be very cold," she said absently, "Unless they go into the hay-barn."

"You and the old man must be related," said Martin in an undertone. "Same kind of remarks."

Tirrie wept over the poor hounds. A few had gone to harrier packs, the others were all dead. "But they might as well be killed as die of starvation," sniffed Tirrie.

A gardener brought in holly, and the east wind with him.

" Hardy fellow Herbert, off out in that cold," remarked Tommy.

Martin winked skilfully, meeting Tirrie's glance.

" Tirrie says he's gone to look at the hay," he said gravely.

" There it is again," burst out Kilanour. " Hang it, the hay's mine. He's impossible."

Grania put some holly over a picture and sighed heavily.

Christmas is a time which unlocks confidence. That evening Major Blackburn thrashed at an abstruse problem and found it could not be solved. He was shaving at the time.

" It is quite impossible," he said at last. " If I had a little money, but as it is." Here he cut his chin and damned irritably.

A penniless man must endure and keep silence.

They stayed for a week and went back to Cahervalley for one open day, the weather flawing back after that to frost.

As the winter waned Mat Riley found that bronchitis was a difficult thing to get rid of. He went out, had a relapse, arranged to drive to tell Tirrie everything, got better again and put it off, and then began to wheeze intermittently and was not able to leave the house. But being fairly well as long as he stayed in the warm, he did not send for Tirrie. He was even persuaded by Florence Maguire, who hinted shrewdly about the missing three hundred, to put it off indefinitely, or at least until after Barry's match had been arranged.

So Tirrie lived on, unaware of her fortune. January bit with icy teeth into February's heel. February frowned at the spring as one who would not be outdone in iron rule, and the evil words—" Stopped by frost," was on every card.

Snow lay unmelted in the hollows, the pools were always crisped. Motor tyres would not grip on the steep hills. February saw her brief days finish, handing her steel sceptre to March, who blustered and roared, throwing out snowstorms and gales and a scant supply of the brilliant sunshine he could give at will. He called the north winds to join hands with the east, he swept the wide country with hail and sleet, daffodils waved nipped heads; budding roses were blackened. Horses, kept fit in hopes of a thaw, bucked and squealed at exercise, their feet pounding on the hard roads; the fields were impossible.

Spring fought half strangled in the iron grip of cold, popping out its laughing face to withdraw it blue and chilled.

Gardeners wailed as they looked at their blighted fruit trees, as the black wind blasted tender blossom.

Hounds sometimes got as far as the meet and optimistic people met them there, but the verdict was always the same, no hope of hunting.

To spend money and to enjoy oneself was something, but to see it running away, spent upon forage, stabling and wages, and never get a hunt, made Tommy thoroughly miserable.

He rode over to Ballinlea one morning, a bitter north-east wind driving light spray of snow before it, and found Grania in one of the old greenhouses, which grew hot when the sun peeped out between the showers.

Grania had filled the house with freesias, their delicate white bells throwing out fragrance when the fitful sun struck them, these, and azaleas pink and white. Outside the earth showed harshly black through its coating of snow, with scarlet anemones flaring as though blood had been spilt and yellow daffodils waving snow-sprinkled heads.

Tommy had left his horse in the stables, he walked into the elusive warmth at the moment the sun blazed, with a frowning shower rolling off, and another rising thunderously thrust its ragged edge above the red brick wall.

"Herbert says this place is tumbledown, and father longs for Castle Crehan," Grania looked up with wistful gravity, which was becoming habitual with her. "And I—want to stay in Cahervalley because of the hunting."

"One could knock down all these stalls and make top-hole boxes," said Tommy, enthusiastically. "And a covered-in exercise place out of the old circular shed. And it's the centre of everything. Somehow the place puts out claws and holds you, this Ireland even with all its follies."

Grania murmured, "Unpoetical but true. Of course one could make boxes——"

She stopped, looking hard at Tommy. The look went straight through the crust of convention to Major Blackburn's heart. A certain sense of pride holds some men fast. He could not. Grania Duff was heiress to many thousands a year—he was——.

"I'm a one-day fly," he said aloud. "Eph—something. Never up in classical things."

Grania said "No," a twinkle veiling her grave look of enquiry.

"I'll—I—I'll be better off in the Colonies," Tommy burst out.

"Is there any reason," she said slowly, "why you *must* go to the Colonies?"

"There is—an engagement. Oh hang legs and Aunt Eliza." Tommy stammered as he spoke. The engagement he referred to was one with a man's sense of honour.

Miss Duff's colour faded from her face, merged to the whiteness of the fragile flowers around her.

"Then I too keep an engagement," she said coldly, half to herself. "The sun has gone, how cold it is."

The black monster cloud swallowed the fierce blue, snow drove lightly besprinkling the black earth, dotted the scarlet anemones, bending the golden daffodils. The house grew suddenly cold, and the strong, sweet scent of the freesias died away.

" That's life," said Tommy. " A hang creepy old storm cloud coming over all the sunshine. My life anyhow."

" They pass," Grania shivered. " The clouds pass."

" Having made us all jolly uncomfortable," he grunted. " I say." Something in his expression caused Grania to open the door, and run through the flurry of snow towards the house. The wind stung, roaring through the trees as if some heavy freight train swept through the heavens. The cold was bitter. They reached the comparative warmth of the big hall, finding Herbert there cursing the draughty fireless old barrack. He looked at Grania's snow-sprinkled hair with manifest displeasure.

" Bad enough to catch colds, no need to set traps for them," he grunted. " Say Grania, I'm off back to Castle Crehan to fish." " The Maguires are giving me a bed at their place."

Grania, her face blank, hoped he would enjoy his visit.

Tommy walked in to tea with dragging feet and a numb heart. He cursed his lack of gold as he had never cursed it before. Had he been a man with a fair income —here Tommy knocked down a small table and smashed a flower pot—He found savage satisfaction in gathering up the loose mould.

" Reminds me of my grave," he said as he absently put it on the fire.

Grania hoped that he was not thinking of where he would pass on to, and added that the fire was ruined for the afternoon.

Even tea and hot cakes failed to comfort. Herbert brought the first flash of brightness by coming in to say that the snow had turned to rain and the wind was in the west.

A rush to the window showed them leaden skies, and the straight lines of heavy rain.

The snow was melting fast and it felt warmer. The meet on the card was Athgarvin away in the hills, with the low valleys round it, but a meet anywhere was something to dream of.

Grania ran to the door, letting in a whistling blast. Lord Kilanour shivered pettishly, because, as he said aloud to himself, these silly fools of children would have gone home if it had not thawed, and Herbert remarked disagreeably that it would be freezing again in two days' time and he was going to fish."

"I've told them I want the Creena to myself," he said. "I've written to the man at the Castle. He told me some fellows had leave, but it had better be cancelled."

The old man's face grew bleak and pinched.

"I gave them leave," he said stoutly. "Some friends who always fish. Not dead yet," he added to himself. "Cub, cub."

Herbert's face lowered with savage contempt for the old man's habit. He meant to have his own way.

The westerly wind held. A soaking warm rain loosened the grip of the frost. Fields squelched again when the horses were galloped, puffing and panting beneath their layers of fat.

The Friday at Athgarvin dawned redly, the clouds rolled up, but lurking raggedly on the edges of the wind. A blaze of golden sunshine set the earth throbbing, and spring danced as if he meant to stay.

Tommy forgot trouble as he got on to his new horse, which he had ridden only once. Martin's dun was like a small ball of horseflesh, and Trevor's old grey stepped up to the meet as if he had never known troubles.

"All the winter gone without its having been there at all," grumbled Trevor. "It's March now."

"Anyhow you fellows can think of November," returned Tommy, eyeing his grey mare who was behaving demurely in a gag. "You look out for pig-tubs, Flynn, and don't mind her good behaviour. She's been like that with me."

Flynn looked at the gag with a soft smile, and touched the mare with his heel, showing her off dexterously.

Derek Knox Harding, not recognizing his enemy, also looked at her and with approval.

"One thing if he bought her, she couldn't knock into him," said Tommy thoughtfully. "So he'd be safer than if you sold her as a reformed character to anyone else."

Tommy felt bitter as to that grey mare.

They found at once at Knockalyn, a twisting fox who dodged to Athgarvin wood, and back again along the side of the hill, took a circle into the valley and dodged up again. Scent was poor on the cold ground, the fences greasy. They circled round and round, yet there was joy in it after the long rest. Horses puffed and sweated even at the pace they went, and through it all the grey mare behaved like a dream, she went easily on the snaffle, bending her neck and fencing perfectly. Flynn's back, as he jumped in front of Tommy, seemed to say eloquently—"See what riding can do?"

"Wait," said Tommy to himself.

After an hour on the hills they pulled their fox down in a patch of gorse and jogged on to Ballmalyn, the square gorse covert set in a saucer full of boggy land. People talked of the state of the ground as horses squelched and slipped in the morass where they stood to see the covert drawn.

It was a small place, and after a note or two, Ned the whip, who replaced poor Harris, put his cap up. They splashed through the boggy gap, to see hounds swinging away from them right-handed, caught them as they dwelt in a sour rushy field and then were away pointing for Standish Blundell's cover on the hills.

The going was deep and holding, hounds fairly flew once they got their noses down and they were in for a good hunt. The Clonanna river loomed up bank high. Tommy, as he struggled for his place in the passage across it, saw the grey mare skim from bank to bank and Derek Harding look at her approvingly.

"Flynn thinks it's my bad hands," said Tommy, spurring his black horse. The black was one of the sober and quiet, willing and obliging description. He did his best in wooden fashion. He jumped well but not brilliantly, he galloped as fast as he could, without hopelessly distressing himself, he did not refuse but liked a lead.

Tommy kicked him along enjoying it all, but secretly yearning for the grey's fire and go.

They hunted slowly through a yellow-hued holding bog, fenced with great crumbling banks, bordered by deep ditches, there was a glint of brown water as horses struggled across, beer-coloured splashes when a man went down.

With horses sobbing they drew clear of the coarsely grassed bog which stretched for two miles on their left, and swung out on to light green land with the hills frowning down at them.

Pace improved, hounds carried ahead and horses failed. They sobbed, yet at each fence collected themselves, leaping accurately if with an effort on and off the high banks, though landing with a grunt of weariness. It was up hill, a gradual slope, but telling on unfit horses. Tommy's black, still willing and obliging, lapsed to a wooden canter. The Master's brown and the grey mare seemed to be the only two going with any freedom. A field of yellow clay was avoided by a few wise men, and as they pulled up at the bottom of the hill watching hounds work up through the scattered gorse, it would have been difficult to find a more beaten lot of horses.

The hunt they said was over, but a few of them toiled up the hill in time to see hounds working out of the covert and along the hill to Castletown Glynn.

Horses got their second wind, hounds did not run fast and they worked along the uneven ground, watching one of the most beautiful sights on earth, hounds hunting on a hillside. Grania's horse was tired, she trotted him very quietly, taking short cuts behind Standish Blundell, who knew every inch of the ground.

As they topped Castletown Glynn Hill, hounds swung down.

" He's going back and not one of us will get there," said the Master. " My horse has got a bad cut."

Flynn, on the grey mare, remarked politely that his mare would. She was as fresh as when she started.

" Mare that put me into the pig-tub," said Derek, as hounds dwelt below them.

Mr. Flynn said—" Young officers," in deprecatory tones. He had put on a gag, but had not used it. She did not pull at all. Derek looked at the grey. She was hot but not tucked up or tired, and she was full of quality.

" I might as well try her now," he said, slipping off, " If you don't mind, Flynn."

Tommy ground his teeth.

Mr. Flynn thought of three hundred guineas and yet looked carefully at the hounds. He rode hard and straight. Then he lengthened his stirrups and, giving the grey to Derek Knox Harding, occupied himself by putting iodine on the brown horse's cut, a nasty one on the fetlock.

The turn down was a gallant fox's last effort. He had been too pushed to find sanctuary on the hills and was travelling on mechanically, his back bowed, his enemies' cries ever nearer. There were holes in the big hedgerow below him if he could reach it. A view and a wave of pied bodies launching out, deadly as a torpedo, a turn, a second's over running, and then he turned with bared teeth to be lost in the flurry of snapping jaws and eyes full of blood lust.

The hunt was over. The Master had gone to open a gate and now charged down the field to get to his hounds.

It was at this point that the grey mare grew tired of good behaviour. She flung up her head, gulped at her bits and was away down the long slope as if she had never galloped eight miles and five of them through dirt.

The gag had no more effect upon her than anything else. With her neck set as a bar of iron she flew a narrow bank and disappeared towards the road.

" As Derek has an engagement," said Standish Blundell mournfully, " I'd better help Ned." He got off. " How long does she go for," he asked Tommy.

Tommy replied that he did not know, but she had not gone far with him.

" She had two jolts that time," said Standish, " You hit the Master and Duff. I'd say myself that she might take Derek back to her stable. Oh, that you, Derek ? '

A scarlet, raging face appeared through a gap in the hedge, a scathing voice requested Standish not to be an ass, and the grey mare jumped the bounds ditch like a deer.

" If you hadn't brought the brute here," stormed the Master to Tommy. " It was only the haybarn full of hay stopped her. We came on to it suddenly and she put me over her head on to a bunch of ryegrass." Here Derek pulled off some strands of hay. " I went into it," he added, jumping off. " And she took a coped wall into the yard like a bird. How often does this happen ? " he asked thoughtfully.

" Only once with me," returned Tommy, looking upwards at the unhappy profile of Mr. Flynn, who was looking steadfastly at the sky as if he could not bear to contemplate the grey mare's return.

" Then I'll chance her at a price," said the Master, signalling to Flynn, who came down reluctantly, his woebegone expression changing to one of almost pained surprise when the Master declared he would take the grey mare.

" Fluted the mason wall going into it at full gallop," said Derek, " and took the bounds fence, up, before that. It's nothing coming back this way. One could endure two runaways a season on her, and if she does it oftener I might put Jack on her, he wants encouraging."

The second whip's glance at his Master was not a loving one.

The good hunt was over and the wind flawed to the north, bringing up a flurry of snow. Black clouds sailed heavily over a sky of raw blue, looking as if they might clear off altogether and leave the sky fire to adorn itself with countless stars, if the wind fell.

They had to ride back against the wind, jogging on to look for the motors, but neither Grania nor Tommy felt cold as they talked of their hunt. Grania's horse was tired but jogged gaily, too well-bred to show it. Tommy's had never gone beyond his pace and slugged homewards in the same willing and obliging fashion as he galloped and jumped.

" I think," Grania shivered a little, " that the discomforts of hunting make one enjoy it better. The wonderful glow of a gallop and then the chill of waiting, or a cold wind like this which one has to ride against. There is the fire which would be nothing if one had kept warm all day, and hot tea and loose comfy clothes and the talking. But unless you people come over I have to talk to myself, for father is in the moon and Herbert contradicts everything I say, that is, he did when we had a hunt."

" Do you think," said Tommy, " that unpleasant things in life make one enjoy that any more ? "

" Engagements and so on. I don't know," said Grania. " You ought to. There is my car."

CHAPTER XVI

THE thaw was not lasting. Fresh storm clouds drove up. The ground was powdered with snow and crisp of frost held it there. The bitterness of March shouted its pæan across the road, with the fierce, treacherous sun and fiercer chilling winds.

Hunting was hopeless. And, reluctantly, Grania Duff returned to Castle Crehan.

Tirrie had wilted in the cold, bleak weeks. Poverty was no longer a visitor at Castletown but a resident. Life was something like the weather, spells of chill gloom varied by bursts of extravagance when Florence Maguire, still hopeful, asked the Hallorans to lunch.

She doled out her store of Tirrie's money, meaning somehow to get more when it was finished.

Barry was not downcast but rather jaunty through his spell of misfortune, taking it all carelessly as something which must pass.

Tirrie could not garden. She lived in her own room, dusting and polishing her treasures, hoarding her scrap of fire, for turf had run short and it was generally too wet for Barty to cut sticks.

The jewelled lady looked down at her sweetly, her exquisite hand clasping the laces, and Tirrie used to weave dreams about her.

Supposing this picture were worth so much, perhaps more than a hundred pounds. Tirrie could not think of anything greater, and she could sell it and go away out into the unknown world. See the shops and the theatres and ride hunts in the winter.

The red anemones came blazing up, the daffodils waved, and Tirrie had to pick them all to send to the new shop in Killone, which bought flowers and fruit. So that the gay colours were not left above the green. The great river flowed black between its banks. There was little frost so far south, but light falls of snow and bitter damp winds blighting the young growths, blasting the early fruit blossoms.

Tirrie hid herself when Herbert Duff came to stay, and Juliet blossomed out in her best clothes.

Herbert was at his best when surrounded by admirers. He quite shone at Castletown.

Barry agreed with him as to every alteration he proposed to make, and most cordially of all as to stamping out poaching.

" When you can do it," said Barry sapiently. " And Scotch keepers will see to it," Barry, thinking deeply, then commenced to throw out feelers as to a gentleman agent, one who for a very small salary would see to the preservation of the game, and look after the men when Herbert was away.

" Which will be always except for the shooting," said Herbert. " But Grania——," here he paused. " She'll rather want to run the show here," he said, " and she don't care who poaches or fishes the river, says they do it so little."

Barry thought of the out-of-season cock pheasant for dinner, which he knocked off a tree in the dark at Castle Crehan a week before. He saw that Herbert was considering the idea of the agent.

" If it wasn't for money, which I want," said Herbert savagely, getting up and going out for a walk with Juliet.

Tirrie, wandering in the woods, felt her heart give a throb of joy as she saw smoke pouring out of the Castle Crehan chimneys. They were coming back. She saw windows being unshuttered, servants flapping dusty things on doorsteps, and next day heard the hum of motors.

Tirrie had been watching in the grey chill of a bitter evening. She ran up the long avenue to see Grania.

" No more hunting, and I've brought Sir Martin and Major Blackburn down for a fortnight," said Grania. " Major Trevor's coming later. They're bringing some horses and I thought we'd have paper chases. Your chestnut is coming here for you."

But as she talked lightly Grania's eyes were sombre. She was afraid of the future. It loomed black as the shower which had come up when she stood in the old greenhouse at Ballinlea, and she could not see any blue sky behind it. Castle Crehan grew in her mind to be something of an ogre, ready to eat her up. She must be as the Roman of old, throw herself into the breach to save her city. She spoke of it drearily. Tirrie, pale and shabby, listened gravely. Young as she was she could proffer advice.

" You see when you have no father, you will still have Herbert," she said. " And he will live for, oh so long. No one would want to be a Tiranogue I think with some near one did not like."

Grania hoped that she might get used to Herbert. She put aside an unpleasant subject to talk of the paper chase.

Larry the Hare could lay the trail. They would have several chases, and choose a good country.

Herbert came in cross and assertive. He had been down at the river and two men were fishing, one had got a salmon. They were Mat O'Donnell's nephews, and said quite coolly that they had leave. This must cease, he wanted the river for himself.

" But they have always had leave," said Grania. " And they send us fish. They are very nice boys and father is under old obligations to Mat O'Donnell. Peter used to shoot at his place and Mat taught him to fish."

" They won't came again," stormed Herbert.

Grania's mouth set obstinately. They would. She then gathered that Herbert had been very rude to Hardress and his brother. Lord Kilanour came ghosting in, listening, growing vexed and nervous. His love for his place had grown upon him as a mania, he was afraid that Herbert might go away and when he succeeded let Castle Crehan or allow it to go to ruin. He looked to Grania to save it, without thought for the misery of her future, so kindly and courteous himself that he could not imagine any man not trying to make his wife happy.

It was only one of many arguments, one slice off Herbert's bad taste and boorishness.

" Don't do it," whispered Tirrie, as she said good-bye. " You'll only be miserable always. What's the use of thinking that it's only a kind of transition when it's our life and every day in it counts. It can't make us good to be so unhappy, we hate everyone."

The next day was grey and dull, a bitter, damp wind roaring through the trees, and Tirrie borrowed Mary Kateen's bicycle and rode to Frank Maguire's.

The rambling yards were full of young horses, a shed brimmed over with calves. Cattle were fattening in another. There was life everywhere ; the life a farmer toils at to turn it into money, which he breeds and rears that it might die for his profit. The big barn was full of hay and straw. Frank was tramping about looking at a batch of cattle which were going to the Fair. Farming was booming, but he wanted capital to put up new cowhouses, to build stables and buy some blood mares.

Yet there was something quite apart from all this when he saw Tirrie as she wheeled the bicycle across the dirty yard. Something stronger than Frank's cunning made him desire to make her happy.

Tirrie was very tired. She had ridden against the bitter wind, which had blown through her thin jersey and numbed her. Her mother had been in one of her rages when she left, storming at Tirrie because, coming to her room, she had found a smouldering wood fire. She had called Tirrie selfish and wasteful and the girl had stood dumb without spirit to answer.

She had missed that new feeling of being wanted since the men had come to Castle Crehan. Martin had scarcely spoken to her, Tommy had been sunk in gloom.

" It was only because they were in my house," said Tirrie to herself as she hurried home with Snap at her heels. And Herbert had called to her as she left not to bring the dog again if he hunted.

So that Tirrie was very lonely. She was at the first cross-roads on her life's path, one signpost marking comfort, one uncertainty, and she studied them timidly.

" You're shivering." Frank Maguire hustled her into the house, where a huge fire blazed in the stuffy dining-room. He called loudly for hot tea ; scolded the maid for not having taken away the remains of a plentiful midday dinner. A lump of boiled beef and a monster pudding, but at least there was enough to eat.

Tirrie huddled into a big, shabby arm-chair, holding out thin hands to the warmth. The heat made her sleepy, she felt as some animal which does not think but wants to be warm.

Frank had never been nearer his goal, if he had known it, but he was thinking more of seeing her colour come back. He got her a pot of tea and roughly cut slices of bread and butter and a rich cake, and fussed about her in kindly fashion.

" One could make this a decent house," he said. " A touch of paper on the walls here and a new carpet. This one was never the same since the hound puppies tore up half of it. The furniture's good. And the drawing-room with a new soote "—Frank meant suite. He looked wistfully at Tirrie, who knew what he meant.

Frank was offering himself with the house, and though he was loutish and untidy he was one of the old Maguires. She would have a motor, horses, and Frank was kind.

He put one big hand out to pour out more tea for her. He had been working all day and it was frankly muddy. Something brought a memory to Tirrie, a long brown hand, beautifully kept, holding a little china figure. She gulped a little.

"That tea's boiling," said Frank. "Have a care. I've been worried all night with a sick cow and a rotten girl looking after the dairy. No use she is."

Tirrie gulped again. She took no interest in cows, but the stillness and the warmth lapped her round and she wanted peace.

She looked up uncertainly.

Frank Maguire saw the look, saw in it with a quickness of perception which he would never have given himself credit for, something of the look of a trapped animal which sees the human hand stretched out to catch it, and does not know its fate.

He leant nearer. Once his hand closed it would be to show the frightened thing he meant to be kind.

"The cow has a bad turn took, Mister Frank, an' I'm afeard she'll die," said a tremulous voice at the door. "She has a shiver on her like the Dooleen sands."

Frank leaped up and was gone. A blast of cold air drove in through the open door, waking Tirrie up. That would be it. She would always come second to a cow. She went out into the grey evening, saw a black rack of clouds driving up from the north-west and left a message with the maid to say she had no lamp and must go back.

The wind was behind her now and she flew along the greasy roads, so fast that Snap panted, until at Castle Crehan gates some one called to her.

Martin was just walking in. He asked her who she was running away from, at that pace.

"Cows," said Tirrie, looking hard at him. He put a hand on her bicycle and she stared at that. "And

—hands," she said hysterically, pulling away the bicycle and jumping up.

" Now what on earth does she mean," said Martin as Tirrie vanished into the shadow of the trees.

Larry the Hare, on being consulted, opined that he could plan out a paper chase that'd knock any fox chase. " Around be Ardglass, edge the bog, take the nice banks or the slope of the hill, an' be twistin' an' connivin' a turn around towards the lake, they could face backwards to Castle Crehan, or if Miss Grania thought that country too woody, finish up towards Killballyowen Hill."

Grania inclined to this. They gave word to members of the Kilanour hunt to come out on anything they had to ride, and settled the meet for Ardglass.

The day was not propitious. A thick mist rolled up, choking down the wind. It eddied and bellowed, swirling smokily round the trees. Then suddenly drawing itself up, but lurking in the hollows. The stillness held, but there was even a faint gleam of sun when they rode up to Ardglass. Tirrie's sorrows fled as she got on to Sweetheart's back. Dahlia had got a horse from Barry and Herbert had hired one for Juliet. Barry was out on a young one which he swopped a milch cow for, with a set of old harness thrown in.

Larry the Hare, carrying a huge bag of paper, despised horseflesh and elected to lay the trail on his feet.

" And don't you let that mean you go snipe-dancing over bog-drains by a plank, and climbing gates we can't open," warned Barry. " Make out you're a horse yourself, Larry, and don't be an ass."

Larry the Hare scattered a half-handful of paper and rushed off up the hill, on which the old covert was set as a dark emerald. Grania was giving prizes to the first man and woman up. A cigarette case and a vanity bag. Larry disappeared over the crest of the hill. It was very still, voices echoing curiously, and a dull haze growing lower in the sky.

" That hang fog will come down again," said Herbert, " and we'll be lost in it."

" Time's up," said Barry.

The trail was fairly plain, but as they galloped, every one trying to get in front, they often missed it. Larry turned sharply more than once, and the questing human hounds overran it. Also the banks were high, though always rideable, and some people skirted the biggest.

Larry had gone off weighted by a collection of silver, given to him, very privately, by several men who wanted to know where they could take a short cut. Larry told them all up to a certain point and then, being of opinion that " the besht man should win," he held on a way of his own.

Tirrie spied the white papers twice when the others had gone too far and got a start, but she lost it when they came to a deep boreen, close to a long, reed-bordered bog.

" He's done the snipe trick after all," stormed Barry. " We have to skirt this, I see the paper over there." But when they got to the white it was sheepswool, and as they quested back up the bare side of a steep hill, the mist fell. It rolled up suddenly, swirling and billowing. For a time they were above it, the hill top and island above a white sea, though it was over them damp and clinging, and one could not see five yards ahead.

There were no houses near. They split up into divisions, feeling their way into the swirl, calling to each other. Tirrie had crossed the brow of the hill and seen the trail. She held on, calling out Tally Ho. Her call brought Tommy and the two were alone when the mist grew thick.

" It will clear, there's a gap, and there's the paper."

Frank Maguire had been late for the meet and only rode up as the fog came on. He was just in time to hear Tirrie's Tally Ho, and he, too, rode that way. The fog clung, it stung their eyes and choked their voices ; it was impalpable and yet actual, the horses hesitated and shivered as they pushed through the white haze.

" If we get on to the boreen here," said Tirrie, " just to the right. Oh," this as Sweetheart blundered against a high bank.

" The boreen is fenced by a hedge. If we follow this fence," Tirrie got off. They groped down by the fence, seeing dimly, just the loom of the bank made gigantic by the fog, found a cart gap, turned in the wrong direction, wandered along the hill and knew they were lost.

Tirrie called aloud. She was answered by a muffled shout from somewhere.

" Hey, I'm lost," was smothered in the fog.

The answering " Hey," died away as Frank Maguire also blundered into the bank and, finding the cart gap, turned in the direction opposite to that taken by Tirrie and Tommy.

It was bitterly cold, the silence palpable, broken only by some sheep's plaintive baa—or a cow's dejected moo. Somewhere far off a dog barked.

A dog meant a house. Tirrie tried to keep towards the sound and all but wandered into a deep bog trench.

" We have got down to the edge of the bog," she said nervously. " Feel how soft the ground is. It's absolutely treacherous. Feel with your feet Major Blackburn, kick so as to walk upwards again."

The swirl lifted suddenly to show them the loom of a hill. It felt more thickly than before, a choking nebulous white blanket spread over the earth.

But they got away from the bog, listened again for the dog's yap, and climbed upwards a track leading along the hill. The fog was a little lighter and they could see dimly that it wound tortuously.

" Keep against the hill," warned Tirrie. " I know this track. It is absolutely steep on one side, with great craggy places down to the bog."

Tommy said philosophically that he trusted the craggy places were easy to roll down. They walked on in silence, keeping near the steep hill at their right hand. Then the path led downwards and divided, one track winding along the hill, one going steeply down.

"There is a boreen at Tim Dooley's at the edge of the long bog," said Tirrie. "If we can get to that, a boreen leads somewhere, but if we miss it we shall be in the worst part of the bog."

Tommy said it sounded hopeful.

"And the path along the hill will only go to some field," she added. They tramped downwards, shouting at times, an echoing muffled shout answering them. Stumbling over little rocks, drifting into thicker, whiter fog. Something palpable loomed at them, and Tommy shouted, "A house!" joyously.

But it was not, merely a shed, put up to shelter cattle. A crazy roof hung on four half-rotted posts, and some dry dusty hay lying in one corner.

"The best thing we can do," said Tommy, "is to wait here until it clears. One can't do wandering Jew through fog *soufflé* for ever."

"These fogs last for two days," said Tirrie, sitting on a heap of hay. "They will find our skeletons here, I expect."

Tommy gathered up a second heap of hay and tied the horses up, giving them a little hay to pick out.

The strange, muffled silence was almost menacing. A sudden hush had fallen on the old earth, her life choked back in her throat.

The dog's bark was farther away, but the muffled shout still drifted to them at intervals.

"Some one else lost," Tirrie said. She was tired and chilled now that she sat down.

They were utterly alone. Tommy grew confidential, pouring out his sorrows.

"If I only had money I could ask the girl I care for to marry me," he said miserably. " But I can't as it is, can I ? "

" What's that ? " said Tirrie. " Something coughed."

" So we are both likely to be unhappy for ever," she went on. " And all because we have no money. I think money must have been the pips in the apple Eve ate, for all the harm in the world seems to come because of it."

" And all the good," growled Tommy. " If I had even six or seven hundred a year. But a pauper."

" Or if I had. Some one did cough."

It was Frank Maguire. He had found the track along the hill and heard their shouts echoing eerily. He had come down the hill unseen and unheard, and he had stood still to listen to them.

Something in Tirrie's voice kept him listening. So this was why she hesitated. He had only to keep silence for a little longer and—he knew it—she would come to him with her fortune. Frank Maguire was cunning, he had always been self-centred and he had never thought of Tirrie until he had found out she was an heiress.

He wanted the money and a wife, but something stronger than the nature he had grown to look on as his own, held him, still in the clinging, choking fog.

He wanted Tirrie to be happy. Very slowly he drew his horse away, feeling rather than seeing his way up the hill. He could tell her or hold silence.

He shouted suddenly, his voice echoing and rolling a muffled sound. Tirrie shouted back.

Frank came on again to the shed.

" This is Tim Dooley's old hut at Ballinvreg," he said. " And his house is only a mile or so off. I could find the way. Once we get there it's simple to get to the road."

Tirrie got up with a quick sigh of relief. Her moisture-laden coat clung to her dankly, making it heavy, her feet were tired. She lagged, letting the little mare help her on, Frank leading the way. He found a deep track twisting close to the bog and though they could not see the water they could hear the plop and plash of water-hens, and the heavier movements of a flock of ducks, paddling.

"That's a great bog in winter," Frank said. "And if we slipped off the track into it now it would save a lot of thinking." He sighed heavily.

As they neared the Dooleys' house the fog seemed to lift a little. The cottage showed in blurred, looming outline, and a collie dog rushed barking at them.

Tim Dooley eyed them compassionately.

"I seen Larry the Hare pastin' out be the five acres," he said, "larrupin out bits of paper, an' I guessed there was somethin' up."

Tommy hoped that Larry was safe.

"There isn't a bog in the counthry'd swalley that one," said Dooley contemptuously. "Every tuft of them knows the poachin' vilyin too well."

Dooley's wife thrust wood on to the fire and set the kettle singing. They were regaled on strong tea and hot soda loaf, given with the simple hospitality which Irish people know, with no apology because the butter was short, and sugar wanting.

Warmed, they set out again in the ghostly silence to ride up a long boreen, overhanging twigs shaking down heavy drops of moisture on them, and to reach the road below Ardglass. The fog had thickened as the day waned. They felt their way at a foot-pace, walking at the horses' heads until they were clear of the unfenced road with the deep bog trenches at either side.

They heard news of the rest of the paper chasers. A man told them a sight of horsemen had travelled backalong the road, gropin' an' grumblin'.

It was quite dark when they reached the gates of Castletown, so dark that if Sweetheart had not tried to get in, Tirrie would have passed them.

"I'll be—I'd like to see you to-morrow," said Frank to Tirrie.

"I'll be here all day," she said, her voice very weary.

She groped her way up the avenue, guided by keeping her feet in the ruts, pushed open the broken swing gate and knocked at the front door. The gate into the yard was barred.

Her mother answered it.

Florence Maguire's face was haggard. She looked an old woman.

" Where's Barry ? " she asked harshly. " I've been waiting all day. Kate Halloran is here, and is waiting for him to take her home."

Tirrie thought that Barry must have gone home with the others, unless he was lost on the hills. " He was riding with Birdie McGuffy when the fog fell," she said, " and Birdie was squeaking at each fence."

Florence Maguire went back to the big drawing-room sullenly. There was no wind to make the chimney draw and puffs of heavy smoke eddied into the room. Kate Halloran, in manifest ill-humour was afraid that she would have to stay the night, she had waited for the fog to lift and now it was thicker than ever.

Thoughts of a poor breakfast harassed Florence Maguire. There was a little bacon, saved for Barry. Nothing else.

" Where has he gone to ? " There was a note almost of appeal in her voice.

" He may have seen Birdie McGuffy home." Tirrie looked in. " Larry the Hare is in now. He may know."

Tirrie caught a furious glance from her mother.

" The McGuffy girl may have been afraid of the bog trenches though it would do her good to fall into water," she said angrily, for the heiress's face had grown bleak and suspicious, and she said she would go home by herself.

An hour later, Barry, curiously subdued, arrived in. Without grumbling he put on an overcoat and got ready to see Miss Halloran through the fog, only stipulating that he should have the pony to drive back again. He was almost gallant in his manner, saying it would be a pleasure to him to take the pony over again in the morning.

Kate's stiffness thawed. She looked critically round the big drawing-room, deciding on new covers for the chairs and sofas. She thought with satisfaction that part of her bargain would be the evicting of Mrs. Maguire.

Kate Halloran wanted to be married and saw in Barry a malleable lout who would be dependent upon her. She meant to have complete control of her money.

" He'll—he is so anxious," Florence Maguire murmured. "He'll speak soon, Kate, if he could be sure of an answer."

Miss Halloran replied dryly that she had not seen much anxiety. " There are words about him and that McGuffy girl," she said. " But we'll see, Florence."

Barry called to them. He seemed to be possessed by some secret excitement, but he was still tenderly attentive.

They were swallowed in the fog, the lamps making a dim blur, and Barry walking at the pony's head until they reached the road.

Barry's mother went back to the drawing-room to lift out any of the logs in the grate which were not quite burnt away. The room filled with the haze of acrid smoke, and dust fell thickly on the shabby furniture, but it would be Tirrie's work to sweep and clean.

" I believe," she spoke aloud, " that it will be all right. That girl has ten thousand pounds, more, for she never spends a penny. Juliet," she called to her daughter who was sitting huddled in a big chair in the dining-room, " Juliet, I believe Barry has made up his mind at last to save himself."

Juliet sniffed. Her eyelids were red.

" He's much more likely," she began in a tear-laden voice, and then stopped abruptly. " No one ought to marry people they don't want, just that they may eat butter instead of margarine," she said peevishly.

Her mother looked at her suspiciously, and Juliet said hurriedly that she had caught cold.

" Captain Duff blundered into everything in the fog," she said. " He would trot, declaring he could see and he went straight into old Molly Hennessy's fish cart and spilt all her herrings. She wants a pound."

When Barry came home, hot and tired, his mother had hot punch for him, and a rabbit stew.

" You saw her back, Barry," she said nervously. " She'll be touched by all the trouble you took. You went so gladly."

" She has a face like a horse. I couldn't see it so much in the fog," said Barry lighting his pipe.

The fog rolled up before the morning sun. Every blade and twig was moisture laden, sparkling in the light. The sky was tender white-flecked blue, and the whole world seemed to smile. Scarlet anemones flared in the old humps which had been flower beds. The daffodils waved golden buds, and spring lilted his song.

Tirrie forgot to be sad. There was hope in the hot sunshine, promise of life in the blue sky. Youth answered the throb of spring's heart. She sang as she dusted the smoke-begrimed drawing-room, flinging the windows wide. A song with tears rippling under it.

Then she went out and met Tommy and Martin who had walked across to see about some boxes which they had left behind. Tirrie stood talking to Tommy and then Frank Maguire rode up. His heavy face bore traces of a sleepless night. He looked with sombre wistfulness at Tirrie. Juliet called to Tirrie, and Frank coughed and cleared his throat and hummed until Tommy hoped sympathetically that Maguire wasn't catching the 'Flu.

" No but—but. I was close to you in the bog last night. I'm not used to thinking, I'm worn out. I heard you say you couldn't marry because you'd no money, and Tiranogue, they're wronging her."

Tommy said " Crumbs," feebly.

Without further delay Frank told as much as he knew about the story. Tirrie's income kept the house. Tirrie was in her small way an heiress. She could marry whom she liked.

" She'd have married me if I had kept it quiet," burst out Frank.

" And you thought——." Tommy's hand shot out gripping a great brown fist. It was only a grip of warm fingers, but in it Frank Maguire found his reward.

" What funny things fellows do think," said Tommy after a long pause. He was not smiling at the misty hills, the flare of sunlight, he was looking drearily at Castle Crehan woods.

" Well, there you are," said Frank dully. " And it's all right. Florence will kill me, I know." She never told the poor kid, kept her like a pauper. Must have six hundred a year with savings."

Frank got on to his horse and rode off at a gallop. He could stand no more.

" Martin. Hi there, Martin," Tommy shouted imperiously. " Hi ! man. Come here. Hurry, can't you for once ? "

Martin dawdled out languidly. The glory of spring was not cheering him.

" Martin ! Here's a fairy tale," Tommy plunged into it. The will kept a secret. Tirrie's money used by her mother. All he had heard, a little garbled and twisted. " And, Martin, the poor devil wanted her himself but he came and told me."

Martin moved his eyeglass. " Well, won't it do ?" he asked coldly. " To take a farm over here—or a great help in the Colonies ? Aren't you set up, Tommy ? "

Tommy's laugh was not one of merriment. He listened as Martin said that anyone must have noticed it.

" Unless she dies at once with a will made in my favour, and she's not twenty-one. What the dickens," exploded Tommy, " is the good of it to *me ?* "

Martin moved his eyeglass back. Through a mental mist he heard the tale of Tommy's woes. Grania. There was no one else.

"Tirrie knew, I told her. Tirrie knew all along. I haven't any income, and Grania's rich. How could I? Those hang anemones look as if the earth had cut itself badly," said Tommy irritably.

Martin, looking at them, thought they were glorious scarlet. The sky never so blue. He drew a long breath.

"Seems to me we have all got into the land of eternal youth," he said softly. "Fairy tales an' all."

The postman was coming up the avenue, pushing his bicycle. He stopped, taking out a letter.

"There is one for you, Major," he said.

Tommy stuffed a large envelope into his pocket. "From Grey," he said. "More advice."

"Open it," advised Martin. "This is a wonderful world." He turned towards the house.

Tommy opened his letter, staring at the typing.

"Anniversary of your Aunt Eliza's death, and the letter enclosed to be read. You have my congratulations."

Three minutes later a yell rent the still air. Major Thomas Blackburn flung his cap up, danced wildly, shouted "Martin, Martin," suddenly hugged old Mary Kate, who was feeding some young chickens close by, and set off running hard towards Castle Crehan.

"The shell-shock has howlt of him at lasht—the diminted craythur," observed Mary Kate straightening her cap. "To take me for Miss Tirrie in the open light of day." She walked in and told Martin, who was waiting for Barry.

The postman told them that he had seen Barry going to Killone Station with a little black bag on the saddle.

At Castle Crehan the thick woods were jewel-gemmed, the lake rippling blue, and there was great hopelessness in Grania Duff's heart. For her father had come to her urging her to settle everything and she was interviewing Herbert.

" You understand that I do not care for you," she said wearily. " Not as one should."

" As long as I'm absolutely free," returned Herbert sulkily. " I'll leave you free, and we'll call it a bargain."

He talked on, stating his ideas. It was almost as if he condescended to marry. There was not one note of tenderness in his voice, but he was civil, anxious that the wedding should not be delayed.

Old Kilanour was satisfied, he walked feebly on to the terrace, and basked in the sunshine.

" There are some business matters," he said to Grania, " which Herbert and I must look into. Settlements. Control of the place."

" Control of the fishing, that's one thing," said Herbert. " No young O'Donnells, I tell you, Uncle. And we'll sell a lot of timber."

Grania slipped away. She went slowly to the rose garden. The place was not alive and yet she was giving her flesh and blood for it. Early as it was, the roses were throwing out pink leaves and tender shoots, and then she saw Tommy, Varmint at his heels, running towards her.

" Grania," he called her by her name. " Grania," he stopped for breath. " Read! I can't talk ! "

Grania took the letter. Dead Aunt Eliza had put Tommy on his trial. She had taken exception to his taste for musical comedy, therefore—If he spent his year in London, following beauties on the stage all her money was to go to hospitals, but if he spent it as a man should on sport and travel then he was her heir.

" Old Grey is delighted—He thought I meant legs—that is," Tommy coughed—" Comedy legs. And not horses! And I'm rich, Grania. I needn't stand back. Smell freesias and look as you did in the old greenhouse."

" But your engagement," said Grania.

"That was to a lady called Honour," said Tommy. "She has no surname. I couldn't speak as a pauper, could I?—Grania. . . ."

Miss Duff, with a good deal of asperity, said she could not see the point, but she did, and something hurt her throat. The sun had chased away the greyness. Castle Crehan must be left to itself.

Twenty minutes later they walked under the bright sunshine back to the terrace, where Herbert and Kilanour were squabbling loudly.

"That would have been it, all squabbles," said Grania softly. She was brave. "You'd muddle it," she said to Tommy, and stood steady, a new light in her eyes.

She had come to tell them that she had changed her mind. She was going to marry Tommy as she loved him and her father must forgive her. Perhaps Herbert would meet them, let her rent the place.

When Herbert realized that he would not be rich, he got up and hit back savagely.

"I'll never do that. I'll let the dam place fall down and plough the gardens, and blast that rockery up."

"You had a bit of an escape," said Tommy to Grania. "Nice easy going chap."

"I'll see it tumble," said Herbert hoarsely, watching the sick pain on his uncle's face.

"You'll have to get it first," said a voice behind them.

Grania's shriek of "Peter" was ear piercing. Next moment her engagement ceased to be of interest since Peter Duff had come back from the dead.

He had lain in a cottage without his disc or his memory, and got back to London but a few days before, rescued from where he was working as farm hand in Germany.

"An English chap came round where I was digging and said good morning. It was Hall, who was at school with me. That's the first thing I remember," said Peter.

Joy never hurts. Peter's father in an hour's time, looked like a withered flower recovering in a shower of rain. All trouble was gone. The old place would pass to his son and his son's son. Herbert, blotted out of the story, listened in sulky silence. His brief spell of tactless domination finished.

Larry the Hare, who had driven Peter home with the jady mare, came up to offer his congratulations.

"Didn't the sight go out of me eyes an' I down at the station house, to see Master Pether," he said. "I was contracted to drive the Daylys to their uncle's berryin' but folly the corpse the besht ways ye can says I for no one else 'll take the General home, says I. An' they took it pleasant. I seen Mr. Barry there too, an' he away to Dublin with that Miss McGuffy, an' a shy look like marryin' on the two of them. She with a feathery hat and a sphotty veil and Mr. Barry wantin' his young horse brought back, but I left that too."

Captain Duff got up.

"If he's run away I'll go and tell his sister and mother," he said, feeling pleased at the thought of hurting some one.

Tirrie had gone languidly to her own room at Castletown. Spring is a thing of tears as well as laughter. The long, hot summer was in front of her and she dreaded it. She was tired of being poor. The glimpse of Grania's life had made her own seem worse.

Martin opened the door and looked in. He stood below the jewelled lady and changed his eyeglass nervously from eye to eye.

"You don't want that thing," said Tirrie, snappishly. Martin dropped it.

"Tommy was last seen flying towards Castle Crehan," he said. "Mary Kate tells me he is moonstruck, and I thought all along that you and he——."

Tirrie smiled.

"I think his aunt's money must have come to him after all. And then I came in to tell you—a funny story about yourself."

It took a long time for Tirrie to realize that she had money of her own—that her father had left her everything. She understood at last why she had signed her name. Her mother's treachery was a flame scorching her. She had lived on Tirrie's money and kept her as a pauper.

"If she had asked me for it," Tirrie's voice broke. "I suppose I can go away now, but I don't know where to, all alone."

The next thing Tirrie realized was that Martin was offering himself as permanent courier in her life's journey.

"We'll go to the moon together," he said. "I always thought that it was Tommy—who was to live in Fairyland."

"And that was why you got so horrid to me," said Tirrie, soberly. "And I—I—It was always you to me."

The sun seemed to have got into the old room. The jewelled lady smiled down at them. Old Mary Kate came back and cried openly to show her joy. She fled away to return with tea and a huge smoking soda loaf and six fried eggs, as the child didn't like them biled, which she declared they must lunch off. She sat down to listen to the story of Tirrie's money and reviled Mrs. Maguire as a mane huckstering woman with no heart in her at all, at all.

The two went out later just as Herbert Duff came striding from Castle Crehan.

"Peter Duff's back," he burst out. "Just landed up."

Mrs. Maguire's hard face softened. If Peter Duff was back, Juliet's red eyelids might soon grow white.

Martin followed her into the drawing-room. He was not inclined to mercy.

"Your daughter Tiranogue has been told about her money," he said quietly.

"That Mat Riley," Florence Maguire stormed.

"And she is going to marry at once," Martin went on.

"The money was much better in my hands," said Tirrie's mother coldly, merely angry once she had got over the first shock. "It ought to have been mine. There was Barry, a boy."

Herbert Duff was afraid some one else might bring the bad news. He came into the room.

"Barry's run away with Birdie McGuffy," he said. "Larry saw them on the train."

Broken then—Paid back for every injustice to her youngest daughter. She had schemed and contrived and stolen for this boy—and now!

They left her, grey-faced, muttering—an old woman, savage even in her hopeless sorrow. Something telling her there was no doubt. Tirrie would say nothing to her. It was Barry who paid the debt in full.

Martin and Tirrie walked to Castle Crehan together, to find Tommy almost drunken with excitement.

"Best of it all, Grania's not an heiress," he said. "We're going to take Ballinlea and live there. Jolly old place. Peter doesn't want it. Bless Aunt Eliza. What have you found, Martin, that you're looking so bucked?"

"Tiranogue," said Martin soberly.